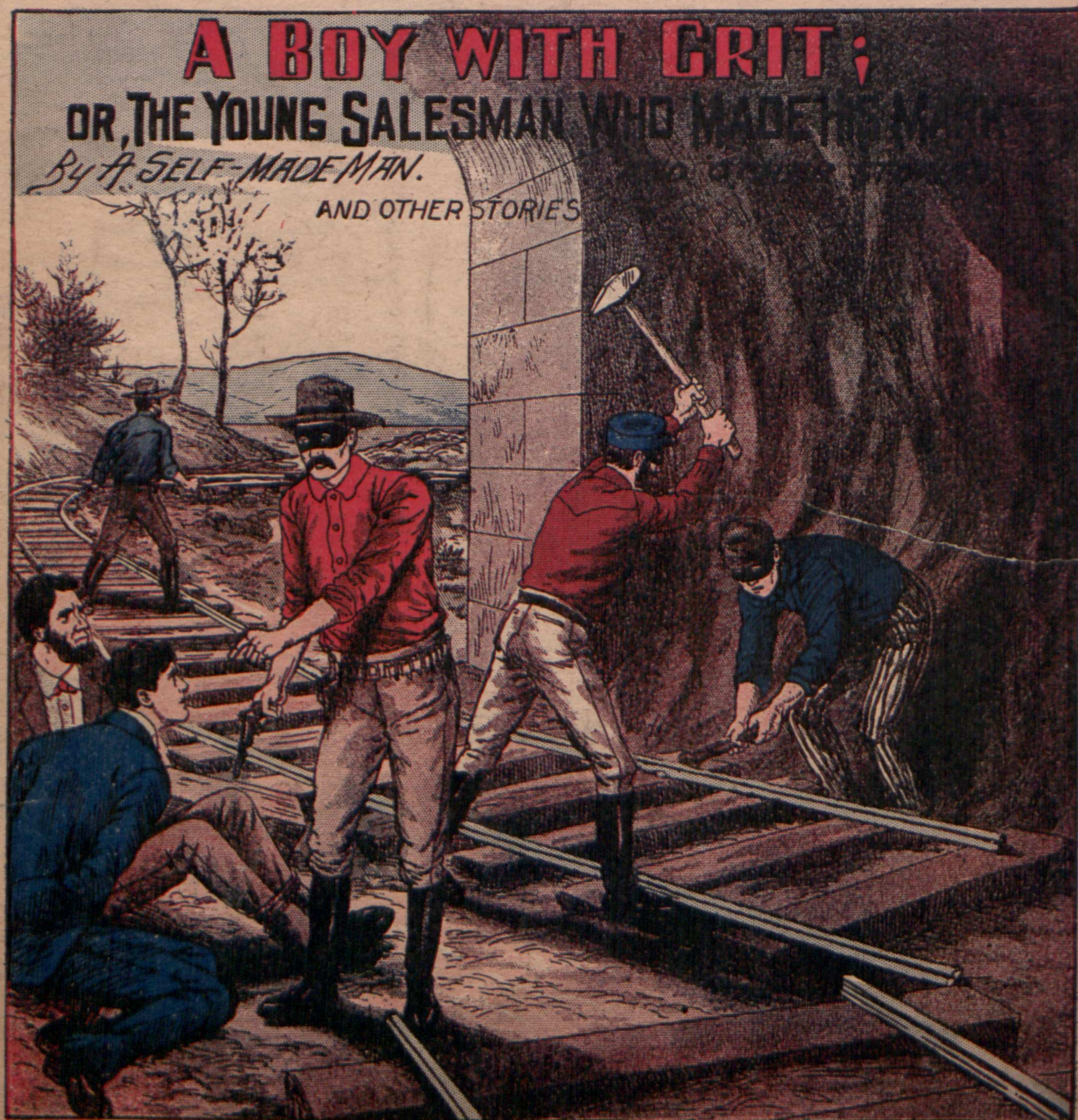


FAME ^{AND} FORTUNE WEEKLY.

STORIES OF BOYS THAT MAKE MONEY.



"Want to know what we're goin' to do with you chaps?" asked Blizzard, glaring down at Vance Vinton and Murphy, the track-walker. "You'll be tied to them rails with yer back ag'in the rock. How d'ye like the prospect?"

FAME AND FORTUNE WEEKLY

STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY

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A BOY WITH GRIT

—OR—

THE YOUNG SALESMAN WHO MADE HIS MARK

By A SELF-MADE MAN.

CHAPTER I.

IN WHICH OUR HERO SAVES GERTIE GARNETT.

"Help! Help! Help!"

It was the cry of a girl in mortal terror, and was followed by a succession of shrill screams.

These signals of dire distress came from beyond the turn of a country road late on a bright summer afternoon.

They reached the ears of a stalwart, good-looking, but rather poorly-dressed boy who was walking along the highway with a small grip suspended over his right shoulder on the end of a stout stick.

The boy's name was Vance Vinton, and he was a stranger in that locality.

The landscape roundabout was a typical rural one of hill and dale, through which a serpentine stream sparkled in the light of the declining sun.

Miles away to the right ran the steel track and wooden ties of a railroad which crossed the stream on a stone culvert, and finally disappeared behind a long stretch of woods, the dark green tint of which relieved the eye in that direction.

The boy's face, hands and garments gave evidence of a long day's tramp upon the country road.

The cries and screams ahead, breaking suddenly in upon his monotonous walk, galvanized him into new life.

The tired look vanished from his face as he looked up in a startled way, and his stride, which had lacked animation, quickened perceptibly.

"There's something doing yonder," he muttered, a bit excitedly. "Some girl is in trouble, and it seems to be mighty serious, too. I guess it's up to me to do what I can for her."

He broke into a run.

"Help! Help! Help!" came the strenuous appeal again, with more screams, more urgent if anything than before.

"Gee! I wonder what's the matter?" breathed the boy, increasing his pace.

Around the turn of the road came a girl, flying at headlong speed, and close behind her came a savage-looking dog, with bloodshot and glaring eyes, and flecks of foam dropping from his open mouth from which protruded a red tongue.

He was no common animal, but a half-grown, full-blooded Danish hound.

A heavy spiked collar encircled his neck from which depended a broken chain that stirred up the dust as he flew along after the girl.

"Save me! Oh, save me!" shrieked the girl, as her frightened eyes made out Vance Vinton advancing on the run.

Vance didn't require a second appeal to his chivalrous young nature.

He was a boy of grit and courage, and the spectacle before him aroused all his energies.

Dumping his grip into the road without stopping he dashed between the girl and the animal, and with a lightning sweep of his heavy stick fetched the hound a blow between the eyes that brought him down on his haunches.

Before the animal could rise he swung the stick again, and a second thud laid the animal out, stiff and senseless.

Making sure that the animal was hors de combat, Vance turned around to reassure the girl, who had fallen in a dazed heap in the dust.

She sobbed and trembled violently as he picked her up. Though an exhausted and somewhat bedraggled little wreck of her natural self, Vance could see with half an eye that she was a bewitching little beauty.

"Brace up, miss," he said in a reassuring tone. "You are safe."

"Safe!" she cried with a shudder. "Where is Prince?"

"Prince!" ejaculated Vance. "Oh, you mean the dog?"

"Yes, yes."

"I laid him out as flat as a pancake with my stick."

"You did! How brave you are!" she cried admiringly.

"You saved my life."

"I won't say I didn't, for he looked mighty vicious. Is he your dog?"

"No. He belongs to Arthur Hoover. Did you kill him?" she added, glancing fearfully at the senseless beast.

"I don't know, and I don't care, for that matter. If I did, he didn't get any more than was coming to him."

"Arthur will be terribly angry."

"I can't help that. The dog would have bitten you—maybe badly. I suppose he broke his chain."

"Yes."

"He looks like a valuable animal, but the owner should have taken extra precautions with such a savage brute."

"Arthur says he's worth \$500. He'll be crazy if the dog is dead."

"Well, I'm not going to apologize for laying him out. It was your life against the dog's, and I guess you're the most important of the two."

"Yes, yes. I'm very grateful to you."

"That's all right. You're welcome. Can I do anything more for you?"

"I should like you to go home with me. I feel weak and frightened yet."

"I will do so with pleasure, miss."

"Thank you. My name is Gertie Garnett."

"And mine is Vance Vinton."

"You are a stranger in this neighborhood?"

"Yes."

"Are you walking to the station? It's a long distance from here—all of seven miles."

"No. I'm looking for Berkeley village, where I intend to stay for the night."

"That is a mile ahead on this road. I live in a big house this side of it. My father is president of the Berkeley Bank. Are you coming to visit any one in the village?"

"No, I'm making my way to New York as best I can."

"You're not walking to New York?" she ejaculated in astonishment.

"Well, I was under the impression that I was," he laughed.

"Why, New York is 200 miles from here."

"Then I'm more than halfway there."

"Why, how far have you walked?"

"About 250 miles."

"My goodness! You don't mean that?"

"Yes, I do. I come from Blanktown, and I've walked every step of the way."

"Why?" she asked, with evident curiosity.

"Because I'm hard up, for one thing."

"Haven't you any money?"

"I've ten cents."

"Is that all?"

"That's all," he replied cheerfully.

"And where do you expect to stay at the village?"

"At the hotel, if there's one there, if the proprietor will let me work out my supper, breakfast and a bed."

"You shan't do any such thing. You shall stay at our house. You have saved my life, and my father and mother will be glad to help you in any way they can."

"I'm much obliged, but I wouldn't like to put them to any inconvenience."

"How can you say that? Father will insist on your staying."

"If he insists I suppose I can't help myself, but I'm rather a shabby-looking person to accept the hospitality of the president of the village bank."

"Nonsense!" replied Miss Gertie, with a little imperious toss of her shapely head, which showed that she was in the habit of having her own way to a considerable extent. "Come, now, let us go on."

"Very well. I am at your service," said Vance, picking up his grip.

At that moment a dark-featured, rather handsome boy came jogging around the turn in the road.

One of his hands was bound up with a handkerchief.

Although good looking, his face could hardly be called an attractive one.

His habitual expression was not pleasant.

He looked as if he thought a whole lot of himself.

"Here's Arthur Hoover now," said Gertie apprehensively. "I'm afraid he'll say harsh things when he sees his dog."

"Oh, there you are, Gertie," said the newcomer. "So Prince didn't hurt you, after all. Where is he?"

"There," said the girl, pointing behind.

"Dead!" gasped young Hoover, a black look coming on his face. "Who killed him?"

"I'm not sure that he's dead," replied Vance, speaking up; "but it was me that laid him out."

"You did!" roared Arthur. "How dare you touch my dog? I'll have you arrested."

"I had to hit him to save this young lady's life. He was just about to spring on her when I came up."

"You had no right to strike my dog," snarled the boy furiously. "If you've killed him you shall pay dearly for it."

"I'm not worrying about that," answered Vance coolly.

"I had the right to handle the animal in the most effective and quickest way I could under the circumstances. I don't believe anybody will blame me for what I did, even if I killed your dog. At any rate, I'm willing to take the consequences of my act."

"Who are you, anyway?"

"My name is Vance Vinton."

"You don't belong around here. I believe you're a tramp. My father will have you put in the lock-up and sent to prison. My dog is worth \$500. You had no right to kill him. You shall be punished severely for doing so."

Almost frothing with rage Arthur Hoover went over to his animal, which was beginning to show signs of coming to.

"Let us go," said the girl anxiously, for she feared there would be trouble between the boys.

"I'm ready," replied Vance.

So off they went up the road, leaving Hoover with his reviving property.

CHAPTER II.

IN WHICH OUR HERO IS NOTIFIED THAT HE IS UNDER ARREST.

"Why are you going to New York?" asked Gertie after they had gone a short distance on their way.

"To make a start in life," replied Vance.

"Couldn't you do that at home?"

"I have no home," answered the boy sadly.

"No home!" she ejaculated in surprise.

"No."

"Are your father and mother dead?"

"They are."

"Haven't you any brothers, or sisters, or relatives?"

"I have no brothers or sisters. I have relatives on my mother's side in New England, but I believe they have never taken any particular interest in me, so I am not going to bother them about my future. I have had a good common school education and I haven't any doubt but I'll be able to make my own way in the world."

"So you're all alone in the world," she said sympathetically.

"Yes, I'm all alone."

"I'm sorry, for I think you're a nice boy."

"Thank you for the compliment, Miss Gertie, and I think you're the nicest girl I ever met."

"Oh, dear, how can you say that?" said the girl blushing. "Look how mussed up I am. I am really ashamed to be seen by any one I know."

"You're not mussed up much."

"I think I look frightful."

"Then I don't know what I look like. That boy who owns the dog called me a tramp. I didn't think I looked quite as bad as that, but—"

"You don't look the least bit like a tramp," said Gertie positively.

"I'm afraid you want to let me down easy. However, there is nothing of the tramp about me other than my shabby appearance. It is no disgrace that I know of for a boy to have to walk because he's got no money to pay railroad fare."

"Father will give you money to buy a ticket to New York."

"No. I wouldn't accept it. As I've walked three-fifths of the way there now I can manage to cover the balance all right."

"Oh, but you mustn't walk any further. I shall insist that you ride the rest of the way."

"You don't know what good exercise walking is," laughed Vance.

"What did you do when the weather was bad?"

"I stayed at farmhouses along my route."

"Wasn't you ever caught in the rain on the road?"

"Twice, but I found shelter."

"What do you think of doing in New York?"

"Look for work."

"What kind of work?"

"I think I shall be willing to take hold of most anything as a starter. If it doesn't suit me I'll look around for something better. Poor boys like myself cannot be choosers."

"My father has a cousin in New York in the wholesale furniture business. I'll tell him he must give you a letter of introduction to him. Maybe Mr. Appleby will be able to give you a position in his store."

"That would be very nice," replied Vance eagerly. "I should be very much obliged to your father if he did that."

"I will see that he does," said Miss Gertie in a tone that implied that the matter was as good as settled.

They were now drawing near the village which lay beyond a dip in the road.

"There is our house," said the girl, pointing at quite a pretentious mansion that stood back from the road in the midst of well-kept grounds. "That other house further on is where Arthur Hoover lives. His father is a lawyer and justice of the peace, and is very well off. Arthur goes to a boarding academy in Haywood, some distance from here. He is home on his summer vacation."

"I suppose you and he are particular friends?"

"No. I don't like him much. He is not a pleasant boy, but as his parents are rich, and of importance in the neighborhood, my father and mother encourage his visits at our house. I wouldn't mind if he never came. He can be very disagreeable sometimes."

Gertie led the way to her front gate.

Vance felt kind of diffident about going in with her, for he knew that he did not show up well in his attire, and he was not without pride.

He opened the gate for her to enter and then hung back. "Come," she said, "don't stand outside. My father is sitting on the porch reading a paper. I want to introduce you, and tell him how you saved me from a dreadful death."

So Vance followed her up the graveled path to the porch. Mr. Garnett looked up on hearing the gate shut, and he was surprised to see his daughter with a stranger, especially such a shabby one.

"Father," said Gertie, as they ascended the porch, "this is Vance Vinton. He saved me from being killed by Arthur Hoover's dog Prince."

"What!" gasped the village banker. "He saved you from—"

Gertie at once explained how Prince, the Danish hound, had broken his chain and chased her down the road.

"I believe he would have torn me to pieces only for this boy who came to my aid and knocked the dog senseless just as he was about to spring upon me," she said.

The banker got up and seizing Vance by the hand shook it warmly, at the same time expressing his appreciation of the boy's plucky service to his daughter.

"Father, I have invited Mr. Vinton to stay with us till to-morrow. He is on his way to New York, and intended stopping all night in the village. I wish him to stop here, so please make him welcome."

Mr. Garnett at once told Vance that it would give him much pleasure to have his company at the house.

"Come inside and let me introduce you to Mrs. Garnett. Gertie, find your mother and send her into the parlor," he said, leading the way indoors.

Gertie hurried away, found her mother in the dining-room, and acquainted her with the particulars of the stirring adventure she had had down the road.

So when Mrs. Garnett entered the parlor she knew how Vance had probably saved her daughter's life, and she thanked him in feeling words, and welcomed him to their home.

Vance was shown to a room on the second floor and provided with means to make himself as presentable as possible.

Then Gertie took possession of him as her own particular company, and by the time supper was on the table they were talking together like old friends.

Afterward Gertie told her father about Vance's unfortunate pecuniary condition, his purpose in going to New York, and her desire that her father should give him a letter of introduction to his cousin, the furniture man, requesting him to give Vance employment, if possible.

The banker promised to write the letter and advance the boy money enough to pay his fare to the city by rail, with a sufficient additional amount to keep him until he got a situation.

Vance passed the pleasantest evening of his life with the Garnetts, and they, on their part, did everything they could to make him feel at home.

His gentlemanly behavior and engaging ways impressed them with the fact that, poor as he was, he still was no common boy, and had evidently been well brought up.

The more they saw of him the better they liked him.

As for Gertie, she was more than half in love with Vance before bedtime, while the boy himself was greatly taken with her.

She made him promise that he would write to her when he reached the city, and let her know how he was getting along, and she assured him that she would answer every one of his letters without fail.

Vance prepared to start on his way after breakfast.

The banker took him into his library and handed him the letter of introduction to his cousin, Wilford Appleby.

Then he gave Vance five ten-dollar bills.

The boy at first refused to accept them, but when Mr. Garnett insisted, he accepted them as a loan.

The banker admired the lad's independent spirit, and felt sure he would get along in the world all right.

As Gertie and her mother were bidding Vance good-by on the porch, Tompkins, the village constable, opened the gate and came toward the house.

The banker looked at the visitor with some surprise.

"What is it, Mr. Tompkins?" he asked.

"I understand that your daughter brought a young man

to your house late yesterday afternoon," he said in a respectful way.

"She did. What of it, Mr. Tompkins?"

"Is that the young fellow?" nodding at Vance.

"It is."

"Then I have a warrant issued by Squire Hoover for his arrest."

CHAPTER III.

IN WHICH OUR HERO MEETS WITH A BUNCH OF TRAIN WRECKERS.

The constable's words created surprise and some consternation.

"Do you mean to say that you have a warrant from Squire Hoover for this lad's arrest?" asked the astonished banker.

"Yes, sir."

"Let me see your warrant," said Mr. Garnett.

Tompkins produced it.

"This is made out in the name of John Doe."

"Yes, sir. Arthur Hoover didn't know his name."

"I see Arthur Hoover is the complainant. Alleges that the said John Doe, real name unknown to complainant, did wilfully and maliciously injure his dog Prince yesterday. Well, officer, the boy will go with you and so will I. It will be necessary for you, Gertie, to accompany us as a witness, so run and get your hat. You need not feel anxious over this ridiculous charge, Vinton. When you and Gertie have testified the squire will have to dismiss the charge."

So the party of four proceeded to Squire Hoover's office on Main street, where they found the squire, his son Arthur, and quite a bunch of curious villagers.

The squire was surprised to see the banker and his daughter appear on the scene, but he made no comment.

Arthur hastened to offer Gertie a seat, but she was so indignant because he had caused Vance's arrest that she refused to notice him, much to his displeasure.

Squire Hoover declared the court open as soon as the prisoner was brought in by the constable.

"Prisoner," he said sharply, "are you guilty or not guilty of nearly killing my son's dog, Prince?"

Vance had been instructed by the banker to plead "Not guilty," so he did so.

"Arthur, take the chair. Put your hand on that Bible. You swear that you will tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?"

The witness kissed the book and was then requested to tell his story.

He had very little to tell.

He said that on reaching a certain point on the county road late on the previous afternoon he had found his valuable dog stretched out in the dust apparently dead.

The prisoner and Miss Garnett were standing near the animal conversing.

He demanded to know who had struck down Prince, whereupon the prisoner admitted that he had done so with his stick.

Arthur finished by accusing the prisoner of insolent behavior toward him.

"Prisoner, what have you to say in your own behalf?" asked the squire severely.

"One moment, please," said Mr. Garnett, rising. "I am here to conduct this boy's defense of a foolish charge, although I am no lawyer. When you have heard the true story of this dog episode you will admit that the prisoner was fully justified in laying out the hound in question. Gertie, take the chair."

Much to the squire's surprise and his son's chagrin, the girl took the seat.

"Now, Gertie," said the banker, "tell your story."

She did so, and her tale altered the complexion of affairs very materially.

Vance then took the chair and gave his evidence.

"Now, your honor, I move the discharge of the prisoner."

After a whispered consultation with his son the squire reluctantly set Vance at liberty.

Mr. Garnett, Gertie and Vance then left the squire's office, while Arthur watched them go with a face as dark as a thundergust.

At the door of the bank Vance bade the banker and his daughter good-by, and started to walk to the station to take the next train for New York.

After he had walked two miles he saw he could save a mile or more by taking a short cut through a patch of woods. Halfway through the woods he sat down to rest with his back against a big tree.

While seated there five rough-looking men came up behind him, and stopped on the other side of the tree.

They did not observe his presence, and began to talk in ordinary tones among themselves.

Vance heard their voices and was about to get up and resume his tramp when he heard one of them say something that attracted and held his attention.

He listened intently, and soon discovered that the firemen intended to wreck the west-bound express at a tunnel near by, where it was due in an hour.

Their object was to secure a box of specie which they knew was aboard the express car.

Vance was amazed at the audacity of the rascals, as well as at the villainous character of the enterprise.

The problem that naturally occurred to him was how could he defeat the project?

It was up to him to do his best to prevent a train wreck in which many persons might lose their lives.

But how was he to stop the crime?

The rascals were five in number, and he was only one.

The village whence he had come was nearly three miles away.

By the time he had traversed that distance and brought a posse of men back with him the rascals would have accomplished their purpose.

The only thing he saw that he could do was to sneak out of the woods and try and flag the express somehow.

He started to put that plan in practice; but unfortunately his retreat was noticed by one of the villains and the men started after him.

Finding that he had been detected, he took to his heels as fast as he could.

Running in the woods has many disadvantages, and Vance discovered a few of them.

His pursuers, however, were equally handicapped.

Vance paid little attention to the direction he was taking, his sole object being to elude his pursuers.

When he finally burst out from among the trees he found that he was close upon the railroad, with the river not far away.

He turned down the track in the direction the express was coming.

The five men came on after him at full swing.

Finding that his grip was an obstacle to speed, he tossed it under a tree and then spurted.

He probably would have got clear off, as he was a fine runner, if he hadn't caught his shoe in a mass of creepers which threw him to the ground with a great deal of force, half stunning him.

Before he could get up the biggest of his pursuers came up and caught him bodily around the waist.

He easily held the boy until the others arrived.

Vance then realized that the game was up.

"So we've got you, eh?" growled the big rascal.

Vance looked up at him and said nothing.

"Here, Grundy, tie this chap's hands behind his back," said the big fellow, who seemed to be the leader.

The man addressed as Grundy pulled a piece of stout line out of his pocket and bound Vance's wrists together.

Then the big scoundrel yanked the boy on his feet.

"Now, then, march!" he said, forcing Vance to keep pace with them.

In this manner they proceeded to the mouth of the tunnel.

"We'll have to nab the track-walker before we can do anything," said Grundy.

"Right," said the leader, whose name was Dick Blizzard. "You and Silvers go through the tunnel and catch him. You'll probably find him in his hut at the other end. Be quick about it, for we have no time to lose."

The words were hardly out of his mouth before a medium-sized Irishman, with a pair of galways under his chin, suddenly issued from the mouth of the tunnel, with a red flag rolled around a short stick under his arm.

He saw the rascals, and the bound boy lying on the ground.

"Hello!" he exclaimed. "What is the matter here?"

"The matter is that you're our prisoner," said Blizzard. "Don't stir, or it'll be worse for you," added the ruffian, drawing a revolver and covering the new arrival. "You're the track-walker, ain't you?"

"Yes, I am."

"Then you're the chap we want."

"What do you want me for?"

"We want to keep you out of mischief," grinned the leader. "Grab him, boys, and tie him so he can't get away."

Before the railroad man could make any move he was tripped up and his arms bound behind his back.

"Now, then, Gallagher, if you utter a sound I'll shoot you," said Blizzard threateningly.

"My name isn't Gallagher. It's Murphy."

"It's all the same to us," chuckled the leader. "Now, boys, get the tools out of the bushes and sail in. Get a move on, for the express is due in a little while."

"What are you going to do?" asked Murphy, the track-walker.

"None of your business, Gallagher, or Murphy, or whatever your name is."

"They're going to wreck the express," blurted out Vance.

Blizzard grinned unpleasantly.

"I knew you'd been spyin' on us, that's why we chased you," he said, with a malevolent glance at the boy. "I reckon you won't do no more buttin' in after we're done with you," he added darkly.

In the meantime Grundy and Silvers got a sledge-hammer and other implements out of a bunch of bushes, and they, with the other two, proceeded to tear up a small section of track at the mouth of the tunnel.

It was soon apparent that these fellows had had experience with railroad tracks.

After they had removed four of the rails Vance expected to see them quit work, but they didn't.

They began digging up the sleepers, which the boy thought was quite unnecessary for their purpose.

Then, to his surprise, as well as Murphy's, they proceeded to lay the sleepers down again in new spots.

What were they up to?

It was a puzzle to Vance and the track-walker until the men started in to relay the rails they had torn up.

Then their purpose was apparent.

Their diabolical object was to cause the locomotive of the express to run straight against the side of the rocky tunnel.

That would bring about a tremendous wreck of the whole train, and in the confusion of the moment they expected to be able to secure the specie box, and make off with it through the tunnel.

Blizzard bossed the job and at the same time kept an eye on the prisoners.

As the work was nearing completion he stepped up in front of them.

"Want to know what we're goin' to do with you chaps?" asked Blizzard, glaring down at Vance Vinton and Murphy, the track-walker. "You'll be tied to them rails with your backs ag'in the rock. How d'ye like the prospect?"

The train-wrecker grinned malevolently as the prisoners looked helplessly into his cruel countenance.

"Dead men tell no tales," the man went on. "If we succeed an' people are killed, the evidence of you two would hang us if we are caught. To protect ourselves we intend to put you where you will never appear in court against us!"

CHAPTER IV.

IN WHICH OUR HERO REACHES NEW YORK AND SECURES A SITUATION.

Blizzard turned away to watch the final completion of the dastardly work.

"We're dead men," groaned Murphy, the perspiration coming out on his forehead in great drops as he realized the fearful fate the train-wreckers meant to mete out to him and his young companion.

Vance thought so, too, for a moment, but he was a boy of grit, and would not give up to despair even when he struck the last ditch.

He pulled desperately at the rope that bound his wrists. It yielded and one hand slipped out.

That freed him.

Springing to his feet, he seized the red flag the track-walker had dropped and darted up the sloping side of the narrow embankment beside the track.

Blizzard turned about quickly and then made a dash at the fleeing boy.

"Stop, or I'll fill you full of holes!" he roared, raising his revolver.

Vance had no idea of stopping.

It was better to be shot down than meet the more terrible fate designed for him.

Crack! crack! crack!

Three sharp, whip-like reports broke the stillness of the midday air, and as many bullets sped after the boy.

One hummed by his ear; a second perforated the top of his derby, while the third went a bit wide.

Before Blizzard could fire again Vance darted in among the trees, and the rascal could not get a fair shot at him.

With many execrations the ruffian started in pursuit, but Vance was running not only for his own life but the lives of others, and he put every ounce of energy he possessed into his legs.

He soon distanced Blizzard, coming out on the track a quarter of a mile away from the tunnel.

Then he heard the distant whistle of the express as it passed a crossing three miles away.

When Blizzard reached the track himself he saw that the fleeing boy was out of pistol shot, and could not be recaptured.

He gave up the pursuit and hurried back to his men.

"The game is up," he snarled. "That cub will flag the express a mile from here and save it. All we can do now is to light out as fast as we can."

With many imprecations the others tossed the tools back into the bushes, and started to retreat through the woods, leaving the track-walker where he was.

In the meantime Vance kept on down the track till he saw the locomotive of the express come into sight, then he stopped and began to wave the red flag to and fro.

The engineer saw the flag, as a matter of course, and shutting off steam whistled down brakes.

The train came to a stop close to the spot where Vance stood.

"What's the trouble?" asked the engineer, leaning out of the cab window.

"The track is torn up at the mouth of the tunnel," replied the boy.

"Torn up!" ejaculated the engineer. "How did that happen?"

"Train wreckers did it."

"What!" exclaimed the engineer.

At that moment the conductor came running up to learn why the express had come to a stop.

Vance explained the situation to him, and he was astonished.

"Jump on board," he said to Vance.

The boy sprang into the cab, followed by the conductor.

"Go ahead slowly," he said to the engineer, and the train started.

When they drew near the tunnel entrance they saw that Vance had spoken the truth.

The conductor, fireman and Vance sprang down and walked forward.

The boy rushed to Murphy, the track-walker, and released him.

He confirmed Vance's story of what had happened.

Train-hands were called up, the train-wreckers' tools were found where they had been thrown into the bushes, and the track was replaced as well as possible.

The express went through the tunnel as far as the other end and stopped alongside the track-walker's hut.

There was a telephone in the hut and the conductor communicated with the station agent at the next town ahead, explaining matters, and the agent said he would send down section hands to fix the track properly.

The conductor took Vance's name, but the only address he could give the man was care of Wilford Appleby, the furniture man, of New York.

The express then went on.

Murphy was loud in his praises of Vance's grit, and when he found that the boy was bound for the station, four miles away, to take the train for New York, he said:

"Stop here and I'll flag it for you. You couldn't reach the station in time to catch it now."

So Vance stopped until the train came up eight minutes later, when Murphy stopped it, explained to the conductor how the boy had saved the express, and Vance got aboard.

He paid his fare to the conductor, who complimented him on his nerve and said that he would undoubtedly hear from

the company after the matter had been reported by the conductor of the express.

It was after six in the evening when the train rolled into the depot at New York, and when Vance stepped out on the street, grip in hand, he realized that he was alone in a great city.

He asked the first policeman he saw to direct him to a cheap and respectable hotel, and as there was such a one within two blocks the officer walked with him there, handing him out a lot of advice on the way, as Vance admitted that he had never been in a big city before in his life.

Next morning he asked the hotel clerk if he could tell him how he could find Mr. Appleby's place of business.

The clerk picked up a business directory, and looking up the wholesale furniture men, he pointed Appleby's address out.

Vance wrote it down, and after breakfast, which he took at a restaurant on the ground floor of the hotel, he started out to find the store, which was downtown.

A Broadway surface car took him within a few blocks of his destination, and then by inquiring his way he finally reached the store.

Entering, he asked a clerk if Mr. Appleby was in.

"Just arrived," was the reply. "Do you want to see him?"

"Yes."

"What name shall I tell him?"

"Vance Vinton. Tell him I've brought a letter from Mr. Garnett, of Berkeley."

Vance was invited into the private office and found himself in the presence of a portly man who looked full of business.

Sit down, young man, and let me see the letter you say you brought to me from Mr. Garnett," said the furniture man.

Vance presented the letter.

Mr. Appleby read it and then inspected his caller.

"You come from Blanktown, eh?"

"Yes, sir."

"Parents living there?"

"No, sir. My father and mother are dead."

"Had any business experience?"

"No, sir."

"How came you to make Mr. Garnett's acquaintance?"

Vance told him how he had saved Gertie Garnett from the fangs of a ferocious Danish hound.

The story made a good impression on the merchant, and he understood what the banker meant when he wrote that he was under a deep obligation to the boy.

"Well," he said, "the only opening I have at present is assistant porter and general office boy. If you wish to accept that you can have it."

"I'm glad to accept anything, sir, where there is a chance for me to work myself up."

"You'll have the chance here; it remains for you to make the best use of your opportunities. When did you arrive in the city?"

"Last evening, sir."

"Where are you stopping?"

"At a small hotel on Third avenue, near Fortieth street."

"Of course you don't expect to remain there. Take the afternoon to look around and find yourself a cheap room. The East Side near Third avenue is full of them. Look for a place near one of the Third avenue elevated stations. The trains run up and down every few minutes all day and most of the night. It will afford you a handy mode of transit to this store. In the morning you will report to the head porter ready to go to work. I will introduce you to him now."

The merchant tapped a bell and a clerk entered from the counting-room.

"Hunt Young up and tell him to come here," said Mr. Appleby.

In a short time the porter made his appearance.

"Young, this is Vance Vinton, your new assistant. He will report at seven in the morning when you open up. Put him to work, and show him the ropes."

"Very well, Mr. Appleby," replied the man respectfully, scanning Vance critically and forming a favorable opinion of him.

"That is all, Young."

The merchant then told Vance what his wages would be to start with and dismissed him.

Then the boy returned uptown to seek a furnished room for himself.

CHAPTER V.

IN WHICH OUR HERO IS REWARDED BY THE RAILROAD COMPANY.

Vance was at the store promptly at seven next morning, and the porter set him to work sweeping out the office and the store.

The clerks and salesmen began to arrive just before eight, and then Vance was sent down to the postoffice to get the bulk of the mail, which he got out of a box.

After turning the mail over to the head bookkeeper and cashier he went up to the top floor to help the porter stow away a consignment of furniture that had arrived that morning.

He was kept busy until noon, when he was allowed half an hour to go out and get his lunch at a cheap lunch house in the vicinity.

Then he had all he could do until the whistles announced six o'clock, which was the hour the store closed.

Vance received a full week's salary on Saturday afternoon, though he had only worked four days, but he had acquitted himself well, and Young had made a favorable report to Mr. Appleby.

Vance spent Sunday in getting acquainted with the upper part of New York.

He did not forget to write a lengthy letter to Gertie Garnett, detailing all that had happened to him since he parted company with her and her father in front of the bank.

The Garnetts had seen the fact reported in a New York paper about how a boy named Vance Vinton had saved the early west-bound express from wreck at the mouth of the tunnel, and they were very much surprised by the news.

"It's just like him to do that," asserted Gertie. "He's that kind of a boy. It isn't every boy who would have taken the chances with Prince to save me like he did. The railroad company ought to reward him for what he did."

"Very likely," replied her father.

Gertie left the room wondering when she would hear from Vance, in whom she felt a very strong interest.

She was so anxious to get a letter from her new acquaintance that she walked to the post-office Monday afternoon and inquired for the family mail.

"I was just about to send it over to the bank, as usual, Miss Garnett," said the postmaster politely. "Will you take it with you?"

"Certainly," she replied.

So he handed her several letters, a magazine and a newspaper.

She looked the letters over and found one for herself addressed in a handwriting strange to her, and postmarked New York.

Her heart gave a jump, for she felt sure that letter was from Vance Vinton.

She quickly tore the envelope open and saw that she had made no mistake as to the sender.

While she was standing in the general store reading it Arthur Hoover walked in.

He came after mail, too.

He saw Gertie and stepped up to her.

She had treated him with marked coolness since the dog episode, much to his dissatisfaction.

As a matter of fact, Arthur Hoover was quite gone on Gertie, and he didn't relish getting the cold shoulder from the fascinating little beauty.

He had his shortcomings, but there was one thing he did not lack—that was nerve.

Although the girl avoided him as much as possible, he wouldn't take the hint.

As the son of one of the richest residents of Berkeley village, he considered himself a person of no little importance.

Since his return home from the academy for a ten weeks' vacation he had been more airy than usual, and even believed that he was conferring a favor on the banker's daughter by associating with her.

His attitude toward her changed greatly when he found that she held aloof from him ever since his dog Prince, who was now quite recovered, had attacked her.

In order to make up with the young lady again he hauled in his horns.

"Good-afternoon, Miss Gertie," he said, raising his hat politely.

"Good-afternoon, Mr. Hoover," replied Gertie coldly.

"I see you have come for your mail, like myself," he went on.

She made no reply, but continued reading Vance's letter.

He tapped his polished shoes with his natty cane and felt kind of uncomfortable.

"May I have the pleasure of walking home with you, Miss Gertie?"

"I am not going home at present," she answered shortly.

"Oh, I'm in no hurry. I have lots of time."

"I intend to make a visit before I go home," she said, hoping to shake him off.

"I can go with you part of the way, then, can't I?"

"It isn't worth while."

"Will you go riding with me to-morrow afternoon?" he asked after a pause.

"I have an engagement for to-morrow afternoon."

"Then the day after?"

"I don't care to make any arrangement so far ahead."

"That isn't far ahead," he persisted.

"You will have to excuse me now," she said, folding the letter up half read and putting it in her pocket. "Good-afternoon," and she swept out of the store with the air of a little queen.

Arthur looked after her angrily.

"If she wasn't so pretty, and old man Garnett's daughter, I'd——"

He clenched his fist, and then walking up to the counter asked the postmaster in a haughty way for the family mail.

He received several letters and two magazines.

"You'd better send the magazines to the house when your son calls for orders in the morning," he said in a patronizing tone.

The storekeeper said nothing, but took the magazines back.

"He's a regular dude," he said to himself as he watched Arthur stride out of the store. "If he was my son I'd take a few of the airs out of him with the soft end of a strap."

On Monday morning an oblong letter, bearing the imprint of the N. Y. C. & H. R. Railroad Company, and addressed to Vance Vinton, care of Wilford Appleby, was delivered at the store by the mail-carrier.

The letter was handed to the merchant and he sent for Vance.

"Here's a letter for you, Vance," he said, wondering what communication the railroad company could have to make to his office boy.

"Thank you, sir," replied Vance, taking it and retiring.

When he returned upstairs again he opened it, and found that it was a typewritten note signed by the president of the company requesting him to call at his office in the Grand Central Depot as soon as he could find it convenient to do so.

When he came in from lunch he went into the private office and showed the note to Mr. Appleby.

"Are you looking for a situation with the railroad company?" asked the merchant in some surprise, and not much pleased at the thought.

"No, sir."

"Then why does the president wish you to call at his office?"

"I suppose he wishes to see me because I saved the express."

"Saved the express!" exclaimed the merchant, rather puzzled. "What do you mean?"

Then Vance told him what occurred at the mouth of the tunnel on the morning he left Berkeley for the city.

This was the first that Mr. Appleby had heard about the matter, and he was not a little surprised.

"Upon my word, you are a remarkable boy," he said in a tone of some admiration. "First you save my cousin's daughter from a vicious dog, then you save an express train from being wrecked by a gang of miscreants. Well, I suppose you'll have to call on the president. Probably you'll receive a reward from the company. At any rate, you deserve something for what you did. You surely saved many lives and the company from numerous damage suits. You'd better go right uptown now."

Vance told the head porter that he was obliged to be away an hour or two and then he left the store.

On arriving at the Grand Central Station Vance inquired his way to the office of the president.

When he entered the waiting-room he was headed off by a dudish-looking youth who inquired his business.

Vance said he had received a letter from the president of the company asking him to call.

"What's your name?" asked the boy.

Vance gave it, and the youth told him to take a seat.

He went into an adjoining room, and when he came back he motioned to Vance to follow him.

Then Vinton was ushered into the presence of the president of the road.

The great mogul received the boy very graciously, shook hands with him and complimented him on his grit in getting the better of the train-wreckers.

Then he asked Vance to go over the incident as it actually happened, and the boy did so.

The president complimented him again and handed him the company's check for \$1,000 as an evidence of the corporation's appreciation of his services.

He added that if Vance ever wanted a favor in the future he must not hesitate to write or call upon him, and if it was possible for him to grant it he would do so.

Then he shook hands with Vance once more and dismissed him.

Vance felt several inches taller and several degrees more important when he left the building than when he entered it.

The thousand-dollar check in his pocket made him feel like a man.

It seemed an enormous sum of money to him at that moment, for he had never had more than the \$50 that Banker Garnett loaned him in his pocket in all his life.

That night after supper he wrote another letter to Gertie, told her about his interview with the president of the railroad company, and about the check, which he said he was going to put into the bank as a nest-egg for the future.

CHAPTER VI.

IN WHICH OUR HERO PROCEEDS TO LEARN THE BUSINESS ON THE QUIET.

Gertie read Vance's first letter over several times until she had almost got its contents by heart, and then she sat down at her desk and answered it, telling him how delighted she was to hear that he had secured a position in Mr. Appleby's store.

She said a good many other things which it is unnecessary to mention; in fact, she actually filled up eight pages, a most remarkable feat for her, before she had got everything in that she wanted to say.

She wound up by telling Vance that she would look for another letter from him in the near future.

The receipt of this letter made the boy uncommonly happy, for he was willing to swear that Gertie was the finest girl he had ever known.

After that the two young people corresponded with great regularity, and the postmaster of Berkeley soon began to notice that the banker's daughter had a pretty steady correspondent in New York City, and wondered who he could be.

Thus six months passed away and Vance continued to perform the duties connected with his lowly position with just as much faithfulness as though the fate of the establishment depended on his fidelity in that respect.

The head porter was satisfied that Vance was one boy in a thousand, and he felt sure that he would make his mark.

As the boy got acquainted with the business he began to take a lively interest in it.

He determined to work his way up to the position of salesman.

With that object in view, he believed that he couldn't know too much about the manufacture of furniture and the materials with which it was upholstered.

He began his search after knowledge by asking questions of Young whenever the opportunity offered.

He found, however, that though the head porter had been for many years with the establishment, he possessed no great fund of knowledge on the subject.

What he knew about the general make-up of furniture was that he couldn't help picking up during a long experience in handling it.

Vance sometimes was in a position to observe the methods and talk used by a salesman in unloading a bill of goods on a customer.

He made a mental note of all he heard with the idea of profiting by it.

Once in a while, from his knowledge of a particular set,

he thought the salesman omitted particulars that he would have called to the customer's attention, and when, in such instances, the salesman failed to enthruse the buyer, and missed a sale, Vance told himself that he would have done better.

With the ardor and inexperience of youth he no doubt overestimated his abilities, but for all that the boy had the right stuff in him to make a capital salesman, and it only required development to bring it out.

One evening Vance stopped in front of a second-hand book store on Third avenue and began looking over the well-worn volumes that lined an outside stand.

He was quite a reader and thought he might pick up something that would interest a spare hour.

Among the books he handled was one that treated about furniture.

It struck him that this would be useful to him, so he asked the storekeeper how much he wanted for it.

The man said a quarter and Vance purchased it.

When the boy got back to his room he spent the rest of the evening reading the book.

It proved to be quite a valuable text-book on the manufacture and upholstering of furniture, and it greatly interested Vance.

He gained more theoretical information out of it about the business he was in than he would have picked up in years in his present position.

What he learned created a strong desire for more information of the same kind, and when he finished the book he went back to the store and asked the dealer if he had any more books on furniture.

The man had another one, though it was not so good as the other.

Vance also found a volume treating on upholstery as applied to furniture.

He bought both books, took them home, and studied them diligently.

About this time a young man whose acquaintance he had made took him to the Mechanics' Library.

This was a free library, but to secure the privilege of taking out books one had to be guaranteed by a member of the society.

When Vance said he'd like to take out books his friend said he'd fix it so he could do so.

He got his own guarantor to endorse Vinton and so Vance became a member of the library for a year.

He found several books on furniture here, books that were up-to-date and too expensive for him to have bought.

Some of the books treated on medieval furniture, that is, furniture of the middle ages, and so on down to modern times.

Vance studied in turn with great care every book on the subject, or connected with the subject, in the library, and by that time he knew more about furniture from a theoretical and artistic standpoint than any one else in the store.

Whenever he had the chance he examined the various kinds of furniture in the store on the second, or sample, floor, and studied their make-up and upholstering critically.

Every time a new design of furniture arrived he wouldn't rest till it had received his earnest attention.

No one but Young noticed what Vance was about, and he paid very little attention, figuring that the boy was following out instructions from the merchant to make himself acquainted with all the details of the business.

Thus another six months passed into the dim and misty past, but during it Vance had acquired an invaluable store of knowledge that only the most painstaking effort could have secured.

The boy had made himself so solid with Mr. Appleby that the merchant was thinking about advancing him to a desk in the counting-room.

Had Vance been consulted on the subject he would have intimated that he preferred a chance to show what he could do in the salesroom.

That chance, however, came to him in an accidental and unexpected way.

One day when the merchant happened to be short-handed in the saleroom quite a number of customers called to be waited on.

Mr. Appleby himself had to go up in the salesroom and take a hand to help matters out.

During the morning Vance was called down on the floor to shift some of the furniture and make room for some fresh

consignments that had arrived a few days before from one of the manufacturers with whom Appleby traded.

Business had been so brisk for several days past that none of the salesmen had had an opportunity to get acquainted with the merits of the new stuff, and consequently it was not yet on sale, though tags had been attached with the wholesale price in the office numbers, which were, of course, not intelligible to outsiders.

Vance, through Young, had made himself acquainted with the meaning of the secret code governing prices, and he could tell at a glance just what the furniture cost Mr. Appleby and what the merchant was asking for it.

He could do even better—he knew exactly what every piece of furniture in the house was worth though an examination of the make-up of the samples, and a comparison with facts and figures he had learned outside the establishment, not from books simply, but from practical talks he had had now and then with furniture men well up in the manufacturing business.

Many of these men, selling agents for the different big manufacturing establishments throughout the country, called frequently on Mr. Appleby, and by degrees Vance had managed to make their acquaintance.

His intelligent talk and ingratiating ways made a favorable impression on the agents, and they often took him out with them to the theater and elsewhere when they were in the city.

Vance took advantage of these opportunities to pump his acquaintances in an offhand way about their end of the business.

He found he was most successful when they were somewhat mellowed with whisky, which he never touched himself.

Then their tongues loosened up, and frequently they became quite confidential with him, regarding him merely as a very pleasant young companion.

In this way he learned secrets they never would have otherwise let slip.

These secrets, however, were quite safe with Vance, but they gave him an immense advantage, not only over the salesmen of his house, but the merchant himself, in sizing up the goods that came in and gauging their real value.

In fact, by this time Vance was a perfect walking authority on the subject of furniture.

As we have just remarked, on the day that Mr. Appleby was short-handed in salesmen and he had to turn to himself, Vance was called to the sales floor to make himself useful, and proceeded to do so in a quiet, unobtrusive manner.

It was now that the chance of his life turned up in the person of a little old gentleman named George Winter, one of the most important customers of the house.

Winter had dealt with Appleby for twenty years, and the two men were like chums.

The merchant always waited on him personally, whether he had idle salesmen or not.

On this occasion when Winter walked into the salesroom, with the sang froid of a partner in the house, Appleby was engaged with a new customer that he was trying hard to secure.

He could not very well leave him, so, after giving Winter a cordial greeting, he told him to take a seat for a little while, or look around himself until he was ready to take him in hand.

Winter didn't care to sit down, but preferred to look around among the samples, so he moved slowly about the big floor, smoking a fat cigar and making mental notes of what he thought he wanted.

CHAPTER VII.

IN WHICH OUR HERO IS PROMOTED TO BE A SALESMAN.

By degrees Winter came to where Vance was moving the new samples into place.

The old man's sharp eyes were particularly attracted to one of the sets that the boy had just displayed to the best advantage.

He proceeded to examine the furniture.

"This is something quite new, isn't it?" he said to Vinton.

"Yes, sir," replied the boy politely. "It is an uncommon fine thing. Something we don't often get into the place. You will observe that the carving on this set is a combination of Charles XII. and Louis XIII. styles."

Winter, though a connoisseur, hadn't noticed the fact, and he looked at the boy in some surprise.

"You seem to understand the design of furniture pretty well, young man," he said.

"I don't pretend to have a great knowledge of it, sir, as yet, as I am young, but I have devoted a great deal of study to the subject of both furniture and upholstery. For instance, I saw when this set arrived here that it was upholstered in a special kind of silk tapestry made only in Lingerie, France."

"How could you judge that?" asked Winter, regarding the boy with interest.

"I recognized it by the design. That design cannot be duplicated anywhere, that is, exactly enough to deceive an expert."

"Then you consider yourself an expert on the subject," replied the old gentleman with just the suspicion of a smile.

"Well, sir," answered Vance, somewhat embarrassed, "I won't say that, but I do know a whole lot about the various kinds of goods used to upholster furniture. Now that set over yonder is upholstered in a kind of brocatelle that is usually used to line the interior of swell carriages. It is manufactured by a certain Springfield house, and they have a patent on all the designs they put out. I can tell that brocatelle anywhere, as I presume you can yourself. You see here is another set fixed up with an imitation brand-of the Springfield output. It looks just like it, doesn't it? in many ways, yet there is a whole lot of difference in the make, texture and quality. This set we sell for \$874 net, while the other costs the dealer \$992 net. Yet I have heard that some furniture men have palmed off the imitation for the real, because it requires an educated eye to tell the real difference between them."

Winter listened to Vance with much interest.

The boy was quite a revelation to him.

He had seen him several times about the house, but had never seen him attempt to sell a single article.

Apparently this lad was well able to act as a salesman.

At any rate, Winter liked to be talked to in the way Vance was doing.

The boy, under the enthusiasm of the moment, forgot that he was overstepping his line of duty, and he kept on showing different sets and pieces of furniture to the best customer of the establishment.

Winter, seeing that Mr. Appleby was still very much engaged with his new caller, and finding that Vance appeared to understand how to talk furniture from a very entertaining standpoint, decided not to wait for the merchant to be disengaged, but to let the boy take his order.

"By the way, what is your name, young man?" he asked.

"Vance Vinton."

"How long have you been with Mr. Appleby?"

"A little over a year."

"Well, go and get a pad. I want you to sell me a bill of goods."

"I am not a salesman. Mr. Appleby might object."

"Nonsense! Get the pad. I know a salesman when I meet with one, and I'll warrant you're as good as any in Mr. Appleby's employ."

Thus encouraged, Vance got a pad and returned to the old gentleman.

"Put my name down at the top—George Winter, Buffalo, New York."

Vance wrote the name and address down.

"Now we'll begin with that combination Charles XII. and Louis XIII. set. What is the price?"

Vance told him.

Winter offered him \$100 less, but the boy said laughingly:

"You're an old customer, Mr. Winter, and you know we have only one price here, and that as low as anybody in the trade, considering the quality of the goods."

The old gentleman told him to put down the set, and then they went on to another.

Vance had the pad pretty well filled up by the time Mr. Appleby was at liberty.

"Sorry to have kept you waiting so long, Winter, but that was a new man I wanted to hold, and I succeeded in selling him quite a bill. Now I'll attend to you."

"You're too late, Appleby," chuckled the old gentleman. "I've bought all I want from this young man."

"Bought all you want from him!" gasped the merchant. "Why, he isn't one of my salesmen."

"So he told me; but if I were you I'd make him one without delay."

"Make him one! He's only my office boy and general helper. It will be some time yet before he learns the business sufficiently to qualify for a salesman."

"Think so, eh? I was not aware that you were so blind to the merits of one of your employees. If I had this boy in my store I'd make him my head salesman."

"You'd do what, Winter?" ejaculated the astonished merchant.

"I'd make him head salesman. He's got all the qualities of one in him, and only needs a little practice to make a corker, you can take my word for that."

Mr. Appleby looked at Vance and then back at Winter, hardly knowing what to think.

Vance, blushing and much embarrassed, handed his employer the pad with the order he had taken from Winter, and excusing himself walked away to finish what he had been engaged about previous to Winter's coming.

He could see the merchant and the old gentleman talking quite animatedly together, and he guessed he was the subject under discussion.

After Winter had gone away Mr. Appleby came back and hunted Vance up.

"Say, young man, where did you learn so much about furniture? Mr. Winter says what you don't seem to know about the goods on this floor isn't worth mentioning. The very first thing you sold him was this new set that came in yesterday. He says you called it a combination Charles XII. and Louis XIII. Tell me how you make that out. What do you know about the set, anyway? I haven't looked into it myself, and consequently it isn't on sale."

"Then I shouldn't have sold it, I suppose. I thought——"
 "I'm not finding any fault with you for having put it on Winter, for if you've made any misrepresentation I can easily square matters with him. What I want to understand is how and where you got all your information. Winter tells me you've got style, quality and everything about the goods down finer than silk. Now you certainly must know a good bit, for Winter is an expert in furniture himself. He told me that you told him things he never dreamed about. He further says that you have the history of furniture at your fingers' ends, and that you are the most entertaining talker he ever met. In fact, he claims that he bought more from you than he intended when he came to the city. He couldn't resist your eloquence. That's considerable of an admission, for I never knew Winter to buy a single piece before that he hadn't more or less decided on before he struck the store. What did you tell him about this combination set, as you call it?"

Vance at once told Mr. Appleby all he had said to Winter about the set.

"How in thunder did you acquire your knowledge about it?" asked the puzzled merchant; "that is, assuming that you are correct. That set hasn't been over twenty-four hours in this establishment."

Vance then explained to Mr. Appleby how he had made up his mind to learn the business from A to Z, with the idea of eventually becoming a competent salesman.

He told him how he had been reading up the subject for the past six months, and then trying his best to reduce his knowledge to practical demonstration.

How he had asked for information from everybody he could reach qualified to enlighten him, and how he had lost no opportunity to familiarize himself with the new and old stock in the store, securing from Young an explanation of the code letters governing the purchase and sales prices.

The merchant listened attentively.

After he had finished he asked Vance all sorts of questions about the quality and make of a dozen different kinds of furniture, and received answers that surprised him.

"Well, it seems to me that Winter was right when he told me that you were wasting your talents in your present position. I can't afford to have you continue any longer as a general helper. I shall make you a salesman forthwith, and raise your wages to a point commensurate with your abilities. I might have suspected that you would turn out something above the ordinary. A boy with your grit and perseverance cannot be kept down. He will reach the top in spite of every obstacle. Come downstairs, and I will fix this promotion of yours up. By George! Garnett sent me a gem when he directed you to my consideration."

Vance followed the merchant to his office, and thus in an hour the boy jumped from the lowly position of general helper about the store to that of a salesman.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN WHICH OUR HERO MAKES A STRANGE DISCOVERY.

When the information leaked through the house that Vance had been promoted to the position of salesman it was received with astonishment and not a little incredulity.

He was immediately buttonholed by one of the regular salesmen.

"Say, Vinton, what rot is this I hear about you having been made a salesman?" he asked rather aggressively, for neither he nor the other salesmen relished the idea of the boy being advanced on a par with themselves.

"No rot at all, Mr. Cooke. It happens to be a fact," he replied Vance coolly.

"Oh, it is a fact, is it?" sneered Cooke. "Has Appleby suddenly gone dippy?"

"You'd better ask him, Mr. Cooke."

"Don't get cheeky, young fellow," replied the salesman angrily. "If you start in to put on any airs with me, or the rest of us on the sales floor, we'll take you down so quick it will make your head swim."

"I don't intend to put on any airs. I intend to stick strictly to business."

"What do you know about selling goods, I'd like to know?"

"If I asked you such a question you'd consider me impertinent," replied Vance.

"I certainly would. Do you mean to say you consider me impertinent for putting the question to you?"

"I think you are treading on delicate ground."

"Oh, you do?" snarled Cooke. "Do you know that you're nothing but a boy?"

"I am fully aware of that fact. What of it?"

"Well, Benson, myself, and the others don't want kids shoving their oars into our department."

"Do you refer to me?"

"I do."

"Then you had better see Mr. Appleby about it. I shall enter on my duties as a salesman here next Monday according to my present instructions."

"Then you won't remain long in the store, I can tell you," replied Cooke darkly.

"Why not?" demanded Vance sharply.

"You'll find out why not in good time."

"You seem to entertain a grouch against my becoming a salesman."

"We don't want boys, especially a boy who sweeps out the store every day, to stand on a par with us. We are gentlemen."

"Didn't you ever sweep a store out when you were a boy?"

"It's none of your business what I did when I was a boy. I'm not a boy now. I have been a salesman ten years, and I was ten years reaching that point. Here you've only been in this store a year, and the boss makes you a salesman. Why, it's enough to make a jackass laugh."

"I don't see that you are laughing much over it."

"What's that? Do you compare me with a jackass?" roared Cooke.

"I said nothing about your resemblance to such an animal."

"You meant it, you young whippersnapper!" snorted the irate salesman, shaking his fist in the boy's face.

"I meant no such thing, Mr. Cooke," replied Vance indignantly. "If you're going to address me in that way we'd better discontinue this interview."

Whereupon Vance walked away, leaving Cooke bubbling over with wrath.

The salesmen were not the only ones disgruntled by the news of Vance's promotion.

The junior bookkeepers, bill clerk, entry clerk, and other subordinates, who felt that the office boy had been advanced over their heads to a position much superior to that which they held themselves, were up in arms and jealous as a bunch of women outshone by some new favorite of fortune.

Where Vance had heretofore received friendly greetings he now encountered stony looks, and overheard muttered sentences of dissatisfaction.

In one day he became the most unpopular person in the house.

"It's too bad," he muttered when he realized the storm

his advancement had raised about his ears; "but I can't help it. I shall stick it out just the same. I shall sell goods in this establishment as long as Mr. Appleby says so, no matter how the rest of the employees feel about it. They're jealous, that's the matter with the whole lot of them. They're jealous of my success."

And with those words he expressed the exact truth.

Vance told Young about his promotion, and the head porter congratulated him.

He, at any rate, wasn't jealous.

Then the boy mentioned the change of bearing of all the salesmen and junior clerks toward him.

"Don't you mind them, Vinton. You're working for the boss, not for them. You follow instructions from headquarters and let them bag their heads," said Young.

"The salesmen will try and make trouble for me so as to get me bounced if they can; but they'd better not let me catch them at any underhand tricks, for if I do I'll make them sweat for it," said Vance resolutely.

"That's right. I wouldn't take any nonsense from any of them."

"I don't mean to."

A new office boy appeared at the store on Monday morning, and Vance didn't come down until eight o'clock.

The other salesmen came straggling in soon after, and gathering in a bunch at the rear of the second floor they held an indignation meeting.

While they were thus employed an early customer made his appearance, and Vance, being wide awake, took him in tow before any of the others came forward, and he was soon selling the man a bill of goods that amounted to several thousand dollars.

He captured several customers during the day and his aggregate sales amounted to more than that of any of the other salesmen.

This fact was conveyed to them by one of their friends in the office, and it further embittered them against Vance.

The boy kept a sharp lookout for trouble from the malcontents, but nothing happened during the week.

Vance was left entirely alone, but that fact didn't worry him any.

As long as the people in the store were sore on him he was willing they should take their own time to get over the matter.

On Sunday night Vance called on Young, who lived in a cheap tenement on the lower West Side.

It was the fifteenth anniversary of Young's wedding, and he gave a party, to which he invited his special friends.

Vance brought an appropriate present and received a cordial welcome.

The party didn't break up till one o'clock in the morning, and then the young salesman started across town to reach the nearest station on the Third Avenue elevated road.

It happened that his way took him past the store.

He was greatly surprised to see the outer door slightly ajar.

The circumstance struck him not only as odd, but decidedly out of order.

He knew Young always locked things up tight at night when he left.

"I'm afraid there is something wrong," he muttered, staring at the crack in the doorway. "Looks as if somebody has broken in here," he added, noticing the mark of a jimmy on the woodwork. "It is clearly my duty to investigate."

He pushed the door in and found himself in the dark facing a glass door a yard from the outer one.

The inner door was shut and should have been locked, but when Vance turned the handle it opened easily enough.

The boy was satisfied that thieves had either visited the store that night, or were in there at that moment.

The office was at the back of the ground floor, the rest of the space being filled up with desks, bookcases, and a general line of furniture.

A single passage, about six feet wide, led to the office.

The store backed on a narrow street, chiefly used by the business houses of that neighborhood for receiving and shipping freight.

During business hours the narrow thoroughfare was more or less choked up with trucks, loading or unloading.

A gas jet was kept burning all night in the office of Mr. Appleby's store, and there was a round peep-hole in the shutters for the patrolman on duty to glance through when he passed that way to see that all was right inside.

As Vance tiptoed down the aisle he saw the light burning on the other side of the glass partition.

As far as he could make out he did not see any intruders. He kept on, however, to find out, if possible, if thieves had been there.

Reaching the glass door of the office he looked inside.

It was empty, and nothing appeared to be out of order.

To make sure he opened the door and stepped inside.

Then he caught the gleam of light through the crack in the private office door which stood ajar.

Vance also heard the sound of voices in the little room.

"The thieves are in there," he breathed. "What shall I do to put a spoke in their wheel?"

Slipping off his shoes he crept over to the door, pushed it cautiously open far enough to admit his head and looked in.

There were two men squatting before Mr. Appleby's private safe, one of whom was working at the combination lock, occasionally consulting a slip of paper in his hand.

The light from an electric lamp held by one of the intruders shone full on the same door, but the reflection lit up the faces of the men sufficiently for Vance to recognize them.

The man fumbling at the lock was Mr. Appleby's trusted cashier, while the other was Cooke, the salesman.

CHAPTER IX.

IN WHICH OUR HERO SAVES THE BOSS' MONEY.

Vance was very much astonished to see Cooke and the cashier in the store at that hour of the night, and especially monkeying with Mr. Appleby's private safe.

They had no right at all to be there, and therefore their presence and their actions were decidedly suspicious.

"They're up to something crooked," thought the boy. "It is a good thing I came this way and noticed that the front door had been forced. I reckon these men will have an explanation to make to-morrow to Mr. Appleby, and it's more than likely they'll get the bounce, if nothing worse happens to them. The cashier seems to have the figures of the combination in his hand. He must have found them somewhere."

"Can't you get it open?" asked Cooke.

"Sure, I can. It's open now," replied the cashier, seizing the handle and pulling open the heavy door.

Cooke flashed the light inside the safe.

"The money is in one of these drawers," said the cashier.

"They're locked, aren't they?"

"I'll be able to force them with this thin steel jimmy."

The speaker immediately began operations, and presently Vance heard a snapping sound, like a pistol shot.

The cashier had broken the tongue of the lock of the upper drawer.

"Here's the money," he said exultantly, "six thousand dollars—three thousand apiece. We'll divide when we reach your room."

He swung the safe door shut and both stood up.

"The old man will wonder how the drawer got broken and the money disappeared with the safe lock apparently not tampered with," chuckled Cooke.

"Let him wonder. What do we care? Neither he nor anybody else can suspect us," said the cashier. "Now let's be off."

Vance slipped away from the door just in time to avoid being seen.

Unfortunately, one of his feet came in contact with an office stool and it fell over with a crash just as the cashier, followed by Cooke, stepped into the counting-room.

"Good lord! What was that?" gasped the salesman.

The cashier, who was equally startled, made no answer.

They both stood glued to the spot, while Vance, who had ducked under one of the tall desks, remained as silent as a mouse.

"It's a stool that fell down," said the cashier, after they had listened attentively for several minutes.

"I see it is," replied Cooke, in an agitated tone; "but how came it to fall?"

"Must have been one of the big cats."

"How could a cat throw down that big stool? I'm afraid there is somebody here."

"Throw your electric light around and see if there is," said the cashier; "but I don't believe there is anybody in the building. How could there be? There is nobody around this neighborhood at this hour, except the cop, and he won't be back for an hour probably. We were careful to close the front door."

"But we didn't lock it, nor the glass door, either," said Cooke.

"Because we couldn't, as the porter has the keys."

"Somebody might have tried the front door, and finding it unlocked walked in."

"Not one chance in a hundred."

"That one chance might—"

"Don't talk so much. I'll turn up the gas. That will be better than your electric light. Shut the door of the private office."

Vance knew that when the gas was turned on full he would be discovered, so he dashed out from under the desk and butted the cashier in the stomach, upsetting him on the floor.

The man uttered a cry as he went down.

Cooke also uttered an exclamation, for he saw the dark object pop out and bump into his companion.

Vance then took advantage of the confusion into which he had thrown the two unfaithful employees and darted for the glass door opening into the store, picking up his shoes on the way.

He slammed the door to after him, slipped on his shoes, and awaited further developments.

He chuckled as he thought of the consternation into which he had thrown the two men, and he wondered how he could finish the job in a way that would redound to his credit.

The cashier had stolen \$6,000 from Mr. Appleby's private safe, which he expected to divide with Cooke.

Vance clearly expected it was his duty to recover that money and return it to the merchant when he came down to his office.

He thought first of rushing to the front entrance and looking for a policeman, but on reflection he knew the chances were against one being in sight.

If he left the building to find one the cashier and Cooke would escape while he was away, and Vance would then have only his uncorroborated statement to bring against the rascals, which they would naturally brand as an absurd lie.

In order to bring the crime home to them the money would have to be found on either one or the other.

Vance could see the two men consulting inside the office.

They were seemingly afraid to come out into the store.

At the same time they did not dare remain long in the counting-room.

The boy knew that it would be foolish in him to attack the men single-handed without a weapon of some kind, and even at that he would be taking chances.

Just the same he was resolved that they should not get away.

At length the cashier and his companions started to leave the counting-room.

Vance shoved the cane settee he had been sitting on across the dark passage.

Then he grabbed up a small, flat unholstered stool that his foot came in contact with in the dark and waited.

The two evidently had decided to make a quick break for the front door, without paying any attention to the person they knew was in the store.

As they hurried forward the cashier collided with the settee, and both went over in a heap on the floor, Cooke tumbling on top.

"Oh, oh," groaned the cashier, "I've broken my shins, and you nearly knocked the wind out of me."

"I nearly broke my neck," howled Cooke. "That villain, whoever he is, put this blamed obstruction right in our path."

"Help me up, will you?" asked the cashier.

"Sure, I'll—"

Swat! The stool caught him in the middle of the back, and he pitched forward on his face with a roar of pain that echoed through the store.

"What's happened to you?" inquired the cashier, struggling to get up.

Cooke lay groaning on the ground, for the blow had been no gentle one.

Vance sneaked up behind the cashier and struck him a blow behind the ear and he went down like a ninepin.

The boy grabbed the dazed man in his arms and dragged him into the office where he tied his arms behind him with a towel.

Then he shoved him into the private room, turned the key on him and put it in his pocket.

"That's one of them disposed of," breathed Vance. "Now for Cooke."

Making his way to the front door he looked out, but there was no sign of the salesman outside.

"I guess he's gone. I'll have to stay here and watch the store till a policeman shows up. It would never do for me to go away and leave the place open in this way, even if I have to stay here on guard all night," Vance said to himself.

He stood there for nearly an hour before he heard the sound of footsteps echoing along the sidewalk.

A patrolman was leisurely approaching, carelessly swinging his night-stick.

As soon as he got near Vance hailed him.

When the officer came up to him the boy explained who he was, told where he had been spending the evening, and how on his way home he passed by the store and found the outside door ajar.

"It was all right when I passed here two hours ago," said the cop. "Somebody has been here since."

Vance proceeded with his story, and told the policeman all that the reader knows.

The officer was much astonished.

"You say that you caught one of them?" he said.

"Yes. I locked him up in the boss' private office."

"I suppose you're prepared to make the charge of burglary against him, so I'll take him to the station."

"I am," replied the boy.

"Then I'll go in and get him," said the officer.

They both entered the store.

When they came to the spot where the settee lay in their path, Vance restored it to its proper place and put the stool back where he had found it.

Then they went on to the counting-room.

When Vance opened the private room door they found the cashier sitting in Mr. Appleby's chair.

"You are under arrest, my man," said the officer.

The cashier made no answer.

The unexpected ending of his enterprise seemed to have knocked the wind completely out of his sails, so to speak.

He offered no resistance when the policeman marched him through the store to the street.

"Find a couple of small boards and a hammer and nails," said the officer. "We must secure the door before we leave."

Vance knew that he would find what was needed in the basement, so he went there and looked them up.

Five minutes later he was nailing the door up under the cop's eye.

"You know the chap who got away, I think you said?"

"Sure, I do. He's one of our salesmen."

"Know where he lives?"

"I do not, but we've got his address at the store."

The cashier was marched to the station and lined up at the desk.

Vance told his story to the desk man, and charged the cashier with robbing Mr. Appleby's private safe of \$6,000.

The prisoner was searched and the money found on him.

After his pedigree had been taken he was locked up in a cell and then Vance went home well satisfied with his night's work.

CHAPTER X.

IN WHICH OUR HERO SEES GERTIE GARNETT AGAIN.

When Young appeared at the store a few minutes before seven next morning he was astonished to find the street door nailed up.

He removed the boards and let himself in, discovering to his further surprise that the inside door was unlocked.

On examining the doors he saw that both had been forced with a jimmy, and he concluded at once that the place had been entered by crooks and robbed.

He started for the counting-room first thing, expecting to find a scene of confusion there, but nothing had seemingly been disturbed.

"The patrolman on this beat must have nailed the outside door up, which is a sign that he found it open. Probably he scared the burglars away as they were all ready to walk in. At any rate, there is no indication that any robbery has occurred."

Thus figured Young, and then he went about his business. Instead of coming downtown at eight o'clock that morning, Vance walked up to Mr. Appleby's home on Lexington Avenue.

The merchant was just coming downstairs in answer to the breakfast bell when Vance rang the door-bell and asked for him.

"Why, Vance!" he exclaimed in surprise when the boy was admitted to the hall.

"I have no doubt that you are surprised to see me, at your house, especially at so early an hour, when I should be at the store, but I have called on a matter of great importance."

"Indeed!" replied the merchant, looking at him curiously.

"Yes, sir. Your store was broken into last night by two men, and \$6,000 taken by one of them from your private safe."

This was startling and unpleasant news for Mr. Appleby.

"Were the thieves captured?" asked the merchant eagerly.

"One of them was, and the money recovered."

"Good!" replied Mr. Appleby, much relieved.

"It was I who found the store door open at half-past one this morning," said Vance.

"You!" ejaculated the merchant in surprise. "What were you doing down there at so early an hour?"

"I attended Young's wedding anniversary last night, at his flat, on the lower West Side, and on my way to the nearest Third Avenue station I passed the store."

Vance then proceeded to tell everything that had happened after he entered the store.

When the boy disclosed the identity of the thieves to him Mr. Appleby received his statement with some incredulity.

"Do you mean to say that one of these thieves was Mr. Smith, my cashier, and the other Cooke, one of my salesmen?" he said.

"I do. Mr. Smith unlocked the safe and took the money out of one of the drawers, the lock of which he broke to get at it. Cooke was to get half of the \$6,000."

Vance then went on with his story, telling how he captured Smith, and later on turned him over to a policeman.

"He is now locked up at the Church Street station, and will be removed to the Tombs Police Court for examination this morning. I will have to go there to give my evidence against him. The police have your money."

"What about Cooke?"

"He got away while I was making a prisoner of Smith."

"He must be arrested as soon as possible. The unfaithfulness of these two men is a terrible shock to me. I placed every confidence in Smith. He has been with me for several years. What could have induced those men to rob me?"

As Vance didn't know their reasons for committing the crime he said nothing.

"Well, Vance, I am under great obligations to you for saving my money, and I promise you that I will make it all right with you."

"That's all right, Mr. Appleby. It was my duty to act as I did, and I am not entitled to any special thanks," replied the boy.

"While I admit that it was your duty to investigate matters when you found the store door open, still the service was an unusual one, and therefore you are entitled to be commended. You are also entitled to some substantial evidence of my appreciation for saving that \$6,000, and you shall get it. Now you'd better go to the store. I'll be down as soon as I have eaten my breakfast."

Great was the excitement among the employees of the store when the news of the arrest of cashier Smith spread among them.

The particulars of the case did not reach their ears until it appeared in the early afternoon papers, when it was seen that Vance was the hero of the affair.

As soon as the merchant came downtown he furnished the police with Cooke's address and requested his arrest.

The salesman, however, had taken the precaution to cross over to Jersey City to remain until he found out whether it was safe for him to venture back.

What he read in the newspapers convinced him that the police were looking for him, and so he skipped out for Philadelphia.

For the present at least he was safe, as no one had any idea where he had gone.

Smith, the cashier, was duly examined before a city magistrate and on Vance's testimony was held for the action of the Grand Jury.

He was subsequently tried and convicted, and he got six years in the State prison.

Mr. Appleby presented Vance with a handsome gold watch

and chain and \$500 in cash as an evidence of his appreciation of his services.

Vance, who had already written Gertie Garnett about his promotion to the position of salesman in the store, wrote to the girl the full particulars of how he saved Mr. Appleby the sum of \$6,000.

She wrote back saying that nothing he did in the strenuous line surprised her, for she knew him to be a boy with grit.

Vance's night adventure at the store had the effect of breaking up the ill feeling his promotion had aroused, and by the end of the week he was on fairly good terms with everybody again.

Cooke was really the head and front of the opposition to Vance, and his involuntary withdrawal from the establishment took the backbone out of the adverse sentiment.

Vance soon demonstrated to the satisfaction of Mr. Appleby that he was a good salesman, and bound to improve with experience.

The boy took a great interest in his new position, and did everything he could to show that he was able to fill the bill.

A few weeks went by and then Vance received a letter from Gertie telling him that she and her mother were coming to New York for a short visit, and that they were to stay at Mr. Appleby's home.

Vance was delighted at the news, for he was very anxious to see the little beauty of Berkeley village again.

He judged that she must be greatly improved in every way, as it was something more than a year since he parted from her in front of her father's bank.

He wondered to what extent he shared her thoughts.

"If she only thinks half as much of me as I do of her I'll be satisfied," he said to himself. "She's a fine girl, and I haven't seen a city girl yet that can hold a candle to her."

Vance waited with considerable impatience for Gertie's visit to New York.

Finally Mr. Appleby called him into his private office one morning and told him that Miss Garnett and her mother had arrived in the city the previous afternoon and they had expressed a wish to see him that evening if he could make it convenient to call.

Of course Vance could make it convenient to call, and he told the merchant so.

At eight o'clock he presented himself at Mr. Appleby's residence and was shown into the parlor.

In a few minutes Gertie appeared, looking radiant in her fresh beauty, which was well set off by a new gown.

Their meeting was a bit constrained at first, although each was delighted to see the other.

This feeling soon wore off, and they were chatting gaily together on the sofa when Mrs. Garnett made her appearance.

As Vance was regarded as Gertie's especial visitor her mother did not remain long after expressing the pleasure she felt at seeing Vinton again, and complimenting him on his improved personal appearance.

"Mr. Appleby seems to regard you as one of his most promising and trustworthy employees," said Mrs. Garnett smilingly. "I am very glad to hear such a good report about you, and I am sure that Mr. Garnett will feel the same way when I tell him. We both take an interest in your progress, for we have not forgotten that you saved our dear child from a very serious, if not fatal, peril."

Vance thanked the lady for her kind words, and soon afterward Mrs. Garnett retired.

The young salesman spent a delightful evening with Gertie and before leaving made an engagement to take her to one of the Broadway theaters to see a popular play.

The Garnetts remained in the city two weeks, during which time the young people saw a good deal of each other, and enjoyed themselves hugely.

Vance was invited to visit at the banker's home whenever he could find the opportunity.

"When your vacation time comes around you must spend it with us," said Gertie; "that is, if you wish to do so," she added with a sidelong glance that was simply irresistible.

Vance hastened to say that nothing would give him greater pleasure.

"But before that time you certainly can come up to Berkeley of a Saturday afternoon and stay over with us until Monday morning, won't you?" she said.

"I guess I can arrange it if you would like to have me do so," replied Vance.

"Of course I would like to have you do so."

"Then I will speak to Mr. Appleby about it."

"He won't put any obstacles in your way, for he thinks you're one of the smartest, if not the smartest, employee he has in the store. I heard him say so."

"I am very much obliged to Mr. Appleby for his good opinion."

"Oh, you deserve it. There aren't many boys like you."

"I'm afraid you are throwing a very large bouquet at me, Miss Gertie," laughed Vance.

"And what have you been throwing at me ever since I've been in the city?" she said demurely.

"I've only been telling you the truth. I think you're the nicest girl in the world, and can't help telling you so."

Gertie blushed vividly.

"You're not displeased at my frankness, are you?" he added.

"Oh, no," she answered with a pleased smile, for to say the truth she liked Vance to compliment her. "I don't mind what you say. You are a privileged character, you know."

"Perhaps it's a good thing that you don't live in the city," he said.

"Why?" she asked in surprise.

"Because I'm afraid you'd take my attention away from my business. I wouldn't be able to think of anything else but you."

"Oh!" she exclaimed with another deep blush. "You don't mean that, I know."

"Yes, I do. As it is, I'm thinking of you more than half my time. When I heard you were coming to visit Mr. Appleby with your mother I was on pins and needles until you came. Now that you are going back to-morrow I've got a touch of the blues. I shall miss you a good deal," he said soberly.

Gertie made no reply, but looked steadily at the rug on which her shapely boots rested, as if she were studying the pattern attentively, which, however, was not the case.

Finally Vance got up and said it was time for him to go.

Miss Gertie accompanied him to the front door, and it took Vance ten minutes before he could reach the last word.

She looked after him as he walked down the street, and wished that she was living in New York so that she could see him right along.

Vance also wished she was going to stay longer, and he wished some other things connected with her, which only went to prove that he was very much in love with her.

CHAPTER XI.

IN WHICH OUR HERO IS GIVEN A CHANCE TO SHOW WHAT IS IN HIM.

A week later a big city dealer who got all his furniture from Mr. Appleby called at the store and told the merchant that he expected to get an order for something entirely original in the furniture line.

A very wealthy man, whose son was about to be married to the daughter of a trust magnate, was going to present the young couple with a fine new house, now in course of erection, completely furnished and decorated throughout on original lines.

The gentleman wanted designs and prices submitted, though it was understood that expense was not to stand in the way of art and richness.

Mr. Appleby said he would see what he could secure on the lines wanted, and asked for a reasonable time in which to consult with experts.

After thinking the matter over the merchant thought of Vance's familiarity with furniture, ancient and modern, and sent for him.

"Here's a chance for you to spread yourself, young man," said Appleby. "if you think the problem isn't too hard for you to tackle."

He then told the young salesman what was wanted.

"If you think you can evolve something particularly unique in the furniture and upholstery line, without being hampered as to cost, go ahead and see what you can do. If your designs meet with a favorable reception you will make a name for yourself in the artistic furniture line that will pave the way to fortune."

"I'll try, sir. It is a matter I am sure to find of great

interest. The furniture is to be designed for the whole house, I believe?"

"That's right."

"Then, sir, I shall want to find out just how the rooms are to be painted and decorated in order to turn out the proper color effect," replied Vance. "I should also like to have a personal interview with Mr. Ward, the gentleman who is going to give the order."

"I will give you a letter to Mr. Hughes, the dealer, introducing you as an authority on fine furniture, and you can tell him what your plans are."

"All right, sir."

Accordingly Mr. Appleby wrote the letter and handed it to the young salesman.

Vance spent two evenings at the Mechanics' Library before he presented his letter to Mr. Hughes at his store uptown.

His interview with the dealer was very satisfactory to him, and Hughes gave him a letter of introduction to the rich Mr. Ward.

Next day Vance called on that gentleman.

He had a long talk with Mr. Ward, and greatly interested that gentleman with his knowledge concerning high-class furniture of the different ages—ancient, medieval and modern, especially that of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; and his ideas of applying up-to-date ideas to the best productions of the past.

Mr. Ward gave Vance a letter to the head of a well-known Fifth Avenue decorative firm who was to produce the decoration and painting of the new house.

"He will show you designs in color for each of the rooms which have been approved by me, and you will thus be able to find out how you will stand in the matter of shade," said Mr. Ward.

"My idea is to incorporate into the furniture of each room some hint of the decorative design of the room itself," said Vance. "I want to produce, if possible, something that has never before been shown in a house. If I can work my plan out successfully your son will have a house that will be a dream in its outfitting."

"That's what I am looking for," said Mr. Ward. "Spare no expense in this matter, young man, and do your very best. Your designs will be submitted to an expert in artistic house-furnishing, and they will stand or fall on his report."

Vance called on the decorator and explained what he wanted to know.

The designs approved by Mr. Ward were shown to him.

"It will be necessary for me to have a duplicate set of these for consultation," said Vance. "They need not be finished complete, only in sections so that I can have the actual design always before my eye."

The decorator promised to furnish him with what he wanted and did so in a short time.

Vance then got down to business.

It took him two weeks to study out the salon furniture, the most important set, which he proposed to submit as a test.

If he failed in that there was no use of his going further.

Vance made the rough drawings, but he was obliged to employ a skilled draughtsman to reproduce them in proper artistic shape.

He filled in the color design himself, and when he had a sample of each article of furniture intended for the salon, or grand parlor, he called on the millionaire and submitted the drawings for his inspection.

Although Vance had evolved what the draughtsman and Mr. Appleby both declared to be a magnificent idea in the furniture line, the boy felt decidedly nervous when he visited the magnate, notwithstanding that Mr. Ward had said that he was not going to pass final judgment on the designs himself.

Mr. Ward, however, was so taken with the result of Vance's proposition that he declared it suited him to a T.

"Any idea what the cost of this set will be?" he said.

"No, sir; but it will run above \$20,000 easily enough. All the fabric used in the upholstering will have to be made specially to order in Europe under a guarantee that the designs are not to be duplicated for any one else. You wanted something original and special. Well, here you've got it. Such things cost big money. It will take time, too, to turn them out."

"How long do you suppose it will take?" asked Mr. Ward.

"Call it six months, though I'm afraid it will take longer."

"All right. I doubt if the house will be ready for the decorator before that time, and he won't be able to do his work inside of three months, so you will have plenty of time."

Vance estimated that the lowest figure that Mr. Ward could calculate on for the furniture complete was \$100,000, as the wood was to be the finest obtainable and the carvings alone would be something exquisite.

The best European wood-carved artists would be called on to turn out the designs furnished by the boy in his drawings, as Vance was determined to have things done up brown.

Vance was told to go ahead with the rest of the designs, and he did so, Mr. Appleby allowing him to give his whole time and attention to the work.

In due time the designs were passed upon favorably, a general and provisional estimate submitted of the cost, and Mr. Hughes received the signed order to go ahead.

He communicated with Mr. Appleby, and the merchant called Vance into his office.

"Young man," he said, "you have hit the chance of your life. If the ultimate results agree with the promise afforded by your designs your fortune is made. As a salesman you have already made your mark in my estimation. For a designer and originator of artistic furniture you seem to be best fitted. The unusual point is that you are starting at the top of the ladder in that direction instead of at the foot, as might naturally be expected. But you couldn't do that unless you are gifted with real genius for the work. To reproduce your designs to your satisfaction it will, of course, be necessary for you to give your entire attention to supervising the manufacture from start to finish. You will therefore start at once. You are to assume the entire responsibility of this order. You may have to go to Europe and give your personal attention to the proper reproduction of your upholstery designs. After getting your estimates from the manufacturers in this country you may find it advisable to have a part of the work done in a foreign country and shipped here to be finally assembled or put together like the parts of a machine. It will be up to you to use your own judgment, for the ultimate credit or blame, as the case may be, will rest on your shoulders. I have no fear but you will come out all right, for you are a boy with grit, and ambitious to succeed in a great venture. By giving the world something new, artistic and superb in the furniture line—something that is bound to be illustrated in the magazines and newspapers—you will make a reputation for yourself that will lead to both fame and fortune. Upon my word, even at this stage of the matter, I feel proud to have been the means of starting you on the right road to success."

Vance was very much gratified to hear his employer talk in this encouraging strain, and he resolved then and there that he would not disappoint the expectations that Mr. Appleby had in his ultimate triumph.

CHAPTER XII.

IN WHICH OUR HERO DISCOVERS A WOLF IN SHEEP'S CLOTHING.

Vance lost no time in getting the work under way, for there was a whole lot of preparation to be done before he could get things started in earnest.

He had written Gertie about the work when he first started on the designing, and had kept her informed right along of his progress and success.

In return she had written him encouraging letters in which she said there wasn't any doubt in her mind but that he would come out at the top.

As soon as the designs had been accepted and Mr. Ward had authorized Mr. Hughes to go ahead with the work, Vance wrote a sort of triumphant letter to the girl telling her that things had turned out just as she had prophesied.

"Mr. Appleby has put the whole job in my hands to superintend," he wrote, "so it's up to me to turn out the goods or take the consequences. Well, I'm not afraid of results if I can get my designs reproduced as the specifications call for. I was going to make preparations to go to Europe at once, but I have decided to postpone the trip, as I have reason to believe that the Springfield Furniture & Upholstery Manufacturing Company can turn out the work I want as good as the French artists, and in that case such foreign material as I must have I can import without crossing the ocean my-

self. My idea was also to visit the famous carving mills at Milan, Italy, and another at Turin, but by accident I discovered that an Italian family of expert wood and ivory carvers and turners, from Turin, has lately arrived in this country, and has been hired by the Springfield Company, so it strikes me that I'll be able to get all my work done here, which will save considerable expense."

Vance having figured that the Springfield Company had the facilities for turning out what he wanted, he packed his grip, and taking his designs in a specially-made case started for Springfield, Illinois, to consult with the general manager of the company.

No one in Mr. Appleby's establishment was supposed to know the business that took Vance out West, but it happened that one of the junior clerks, who privately felt very jealous of Vinton's success, overheard an interview between Vance and the merchant, and thereby learned a secret not intended for his ears.

This clerk, whose name was Moss, was a second cousin of the rascally Cooke, Mr. Appleby's late salesman, who had been implicated in the safe robbery, but had escaped by skipping out of the State, going to Philadelphia, and changing his name.

Cooke kept up communication with Moss, whose fidelity he believed he could rely on, and he got all his personal belongings out of his rooms in West Thirty-fourth Street and forwarded to him in Philadelphia through the connivance of Moss.

When Moss discovered that Vance was going West, and the nature of the business taking him there, he lost no time in communicating the facts to Cooke, telling him that here was a chance for him to get square with the boy who had queered the business of looting Mr. Appleby's private safe.

"He is carrying designs of great value with him in a small, flat, black case," wrote Moss. "If you can get that case away from him somewhere between Philadelphia and Springfield, Ill., you'll put him in a mighty bad hole. He is going to take the 7:00 p. m. limited for Chicago over the Pennsylvania road on Thursday next. This train reaches Philadelphia about nine o'clock, so look out for it if you're game to get on the job."

Cooke duly received Moss' letter under his assumed name, and after reading it over decided that he would buy a ticket as far as Pittsburg, and try to steal the case of designs from Vance before he reached the Smoky City.

The boy would be traveling in one of the sleepers, and, if possible, he would get a berth in the same car, and try his game on after Vance had turned in and was asleep.

Of course he would have to disguise himself in order to prevent Vinton from recognizing him, so when he got aboard the train at the North Philadelphia station he was made up as a white-haired old man of sixty-five years.

He walked slowly through the Pullman cars at the end of the train, and located Vance in the last one.

There happened to be a vacant berth in the car, and Cooke secured it from the conductor before the train pulled out for the West.

This berth happened to be the upper one in the same section as that secured by Vance, and Cooke therefore was entitled to occupy the double seat facing the boy.

Vance was reading a current issue of a monthly magazine when Cooke took possession of the seat to which his Pullman car ticket entitled him.

The young salesman looked up and saw that his new traveling companion appeared to be an inoffensive-looking old gentleman with white hair.

He did not dream that the white hair and mustache were bogus; the florid complexion and wrinkles made up with the aid of theatrical face preparations, and the aged manners assumed.

Vance was young yet in the ways of the world, and not overburdened with suspicions of mankind in general.

In this country, especially when brought into contact on trains or steamboats, it is an easy matter for two men to strike up a temporary acquaintanceship, and even become quite chummy before they part, never, in all probability, to meet again.

Cooke took advantage of this privilege of travelers to introduce himself as soon as possible to the boy he intended robbing.

The first thing he did, however, was to look around for the flat black case that Moss had informed him contained the valuable designs.

He saw it on the seat beside Vance, between his body and the side of the car.

After leaving Philadelphia the porter started in to make up the seats into beds.

Cooke, while he pretended to be reading an evening paper, was watching Vance in a furtive way.

"I guess we'll have to move, young man," he said as the porter came up.

The boy nodded and left his seat as Cooke did the same.

He was careful to pick up the case containing his designs and take it with him.

They walked back to the smoking compartment at the end of the car.

Cooke produced a cigar-case.

"Do you smoke, young man?" he asked, presenting it to Vance.

"No, thank you, I don't indulge," replied the boy.

"Would I be presuming too much if I asked your name?"

"Vance Vinton."

"Mine is Gregory Gallup. I'm a furniture dealer from Springfield, Illinois."

"Indeed!" replied Vance, with some interest. "Furniture is my line, too."

"You don't say! Have you a store of your own?"

"No, sir. I am connected with the wholesale house of Wilford Appleby, No. — Blank Street, New York."

"I've heard of the establishment. It's an old house in the line."

"Yes, sir. Mr. Appleby has been in business about thirty years."

They continued to converse for a time and then Vance excused himself, saying that he guessed he would turn in.

Cooke betook himself to the rear platform, where there were stools for the accommodation of the passengers, and finished his cigar, turning over in his mind the best available plan for securing the case.

He had a bottle of chloroform in his pocket which he intended to use for stupefying Vance if he couldn't get at the case any other way.

He remained up until eleven, by which time everybody in the car, except the porter, was in his bunk.

Then he went to the section, the upper berth of which was his.

A thick and heavy curtain veiled the bunks.

Observing that the porter was not visible he got behind the curtain and looked into the lower berth where Vance lay asleep.

He saw no sign of the flat black case and concluded that the boy had stowed it under his pillow for greater safety.

He did not dare fumble for it lest he wake Vance up.

"I'll have to drug him," he muttered, putting his hand in his pocket for the bottle of chloroform.

He thrust his head out through the folds of the curtain and saw that the coast was still clear.

Then he took his handkerchief from his pocket and began saturating it with the drug.

At that moment something awakened Vance and he saw the old white-haired man pouring something from a bottle on a handkerchief.

He naturally supposed the presumed old gentleman was going through the performance for his own benefit.

Cooke recorked the bottle and returned it to his pocket, then, not noticing that his intended victim was awake and looking at him, he thrust his hand forward and pressed the handkerchief over the boy's mouth and nostrils.

CHAPTER XIII.

IN WHICH OUR HERO GIVES ANOTHER DEMONSTRATION THAT HE IS A BOY OF GRIT.

In an instant Vance was alive to the real significance of the situation.

Vance dashed the hand and handkerchief from his face and sat up in his berth, though not before he caught a good whiff of the drug, which made him feel confused and dizzy.

Cooke, seeing that he had been detected in the act, became desperate, for he felt that exposure and arrest were likely to follow.

With an imprecation he threw himself upon the boy and tried to accomplish his purpose.

Vance was a sturdy youth, and though Cooke had the

advantage of position, the boy put up such a struggle that the disguised furniture salesman was unable to make any headway.

The noise they made attracted the attention of the colored porter, who at that moment came into that part of the car to collect the shoes, which it was his practice to polish for the customary tips he secured thereby from the passengers.

"Hello!" he exclaimed, coming to the section. "What's the trouble here?"

"Catch hold of this old man," replied Vance. "He's been trying to drug me."

Before the astonished porter could do anything Cooke sprang up, pushed him aside and rushed forward into the next car.

Vance jumped out of his berth, and while he hurried on his trousers and jacket, which he had removed when he turned in, explained matters to the porter.

"Where is the conductor?" he inquired of the darky.

"In the fust car, I guess, boss."

"You mean the first of the three Pullmans?"

"That's right."

"I must see him at once. That old rascal must be caught and turned over to the police at the next stopping place. I'll bet he's some professional that makes a business of robbing passengers in the sleeping-cars."

Vance then hastened to the third Pullman forward and found the conductor in his private compartment in the car.

He told his story, to the man's surprise, and requested that the train be searched for the white-headed rascal.

The conductor considered the case serious enough to take the matter in hand right away, and he called to his assistance the regular conductor of the train, who was forward in the baggage-car.

Several of the train-hands were pressed into service, and after Vance had accurately described the personal appearance of the man who had tried to drug him, for the presumed purpose of robbing him the more easily, the search was begun of the cars.

Cooke, knowing that he could not escape from a train running over fifty miles an hour, felt that his only chance would be to remove his disguise and trust to luck.

He dashed into the lavatory of the middle Pullman, hurriedly got rid of his white wig and beard, and washed the make-up from his face.

When he had resumed his natural appearance he looked nothing at all like the old gentleman character in which he had been masquerading.

Through a crack in the wash-room door he saw Vance go forward.

He noticed that Vance did not have his case of designs with him, and a daring idea took possession of his brain, which was nothing less than to venture back into the rear Pullman and search the boy's bunk for it while he was absent.

He put this idea into practice at once, for he had no time to lose.

The rascal went directly to Vance's berth, pulled the pillows aside and saw the coveted case lying on the top of the mattress.

He grabbed it and rushed out on the rear platform, where he began to consider whether he dare take the desperate risk of leaping from the swiftly moving train.

In the meantime the search went on through the cars, beginning with the smoker and continuing thence to the day coaches, and finally back to the sleepers.

The search became more careful than ever when the party struck the Pullmans.

They looked into all the wash-rooms and other compartments, but did not disturb any of the sleepers, though every vacant berth, of which there were only a few, was examined.

Cooking, looking through the rear door, saw the searching party enter the last car.

Suddenly the locomotive blew its whistle for down brakes.

Then the rascally salesman felt the jolting of the car as the airbrakes were applied.

The speed of the train was decreasing.

With a thrill of satisfaction Cooke jumped down on the lowest step, ready to spring to the ground at the proper moment.

He had the small black case in his hands containing Vance's precious designs, and his wicked heart was now exultant at the thought that things had come his way at last.

Three toots from the engine and the brakes were removed from the wheels.

The train began to regain headway.

Cooke knew he had to jump now, if ever, and he sprang into the darkness.

As he did so the search party came out on the rear platform and Vance, who had discovered the loss of his case, saw the shadowy figure leap from the last step.

He was satisfied that it was the little old man who had outwitted them up to that point, and that he had stolen his precious case.

Without waiting to consider the question further, for it was absolutely necessary that he should recover his case with the designs, he rushed down the steps and sprang from the train, too.

CHAPTER XIV.

IN WHICH OUR HERO IS TREATED TO A SURPRISE.

Vance landed on the roadbed with a shock that nearly knocked the senses out of him, although he had taken the precaution to jump with the train.

His nerve, however, didn't desert him, and he picked himself up in time to see the light from the doorway of the last Pullman vanish around a curve.

Without the loss of many moments he started back along the track for the purpose of getting on the track of the little old man who had taken his case.

He hurried along in the gloom of the night, peering ahead for a glimpse of the man he was after.

The darkness of the night was against him for one thing, as the sky was overcast, and both sides of the four-track road were lined with trees at that point.

Fortune played somewhat into his hands, because Cooke was dazed by his fall from the train, and was sitting alongside the tracks followed by the express when Vance came along.

Cooke saw him, but did not recognize him in the darkness.

He supposed that the newcomer was somebody tramping the track, maybe to his home in that vicinity.

Vance stopped in front of him.

He didn't recognize Cooke, but he could see one thing, that this man was not the white-haired rascal he was in search of.

His first impression was that the man was drunk.

"Hello! What's the matter?" he said.

Cooke recognized Vance's voice in some astonishment, and looking at him closer saw that it was indeed the boy himself.

Cooke was immediately seized with a funk.

He looked around for the case of designs, which had fallen out of his hands when he struck the ground, and picking it up made a sudden break for the woods on one side of the railroad.

Dark as it was, Vance recognized the case with no little surprise, for his mind associated it in company with the old white-haired rascal.

"Come back here with that case!" he yelled at Cooke, rushing after him as he spoke.

Cooke paid no attention to him, all his energies being devoted to putting as great a distance between himself and the owner of the case as possible.

Vance's "monkey" was up, however.

He intended to get his case of designs back at any risk.

After a fifteen-minute chase, during which Vance tried in vain to overhaul the man with the case, all sounds suddenly ceased ahead, leaving the boy at a loss to conjecture what trick the fugitive had adopted to insure his escape.

Vance hunted around for a quarter of an hour without result, and then was forced to admit to himself that the man had fooled him successfully.

There was no use monkeying around in the wood in the darkness any longer.

The only thing he could do was to go straight forward and trust to luck.

He walked sturdily ahead, trying to keep his courage up.

He had left New York full of hope at seven o'clock that evening, and now five hours later things were all at sixes and sevens with him.

"Life is full of ups and downs," he muttered. "I sup-

pose a fellow has to take the bitter with the sweet. But the jolt I've got is simply the worst ever."

As he breathed the thought he came out of the woods to a road.

A considerable distance ahead he saw a faint light which he guessed came from a house.

Fifteen minutes later he saw the outlines of a two-story building looming through the gloom.

The light came from a window on the ground floor.

The house faced right on the road, and a wide veranda ran the entire length of its front.

Vance walked up to the window and looked in.

One glance caused him to utter a gasp of astonishment.

Sitting at a cheap wooden table, with a bottle of liquor between them, and glasses in their hands, were two men, one of whom the boy easily recognized as Cooke, Mr. Appleby's former salesman who was wanted for his connection with the safe robbery, while the other was the scoundrel Blizzard, who had bossed the train-wrecking job on the New York Central road which Vance had prevented from coming to a head.

"Well, who'd think of seeing Cooke way out here in the wilds of Pennsylvania?" breathed Vance. "Hobnobbing with that rascally train-wrecker, too. They are talking together as if they were old friends. Great Scott! If that isn't my case of designs lying on the floor beside him. How in thunder did it come into his possession? Why, he must have been the fellow I ran against along the railroad, and afterward chased and lost in the woods. He must have seen the white-haired man jump from the Pullman. Maybe the shock knocked him unconscious, and Cooke took advantage of the fact to secure the case. I'd like to hear what they are talking about."

The top sash was open a few inches, but the bottom one was closed tight, and only a faint murmur reached Vance's ears.

He put his hand in his pocket and pulled out his jack-knife.

Opening the big blade he jabbed it under the lower sash and pried it up a little.

Repeated efforts enabled him to raise it high enough for him to get his fingers under it, then he pushed it up a couple of inches.

Placing his ear to the opening he was now able to hear all that was said in the room.

The very first words that Vance heard caused his face to assume an unconscious expression of astonishment.

Cooke was telling Blizzard how he had been masquerading on the Chicago Limited as a white-haired old man in order to capture the case of valuable furniture designs now in his possession.

He described how he had taken advantage of Vinton's absence from the last car to go to his berth, grab his case, which he found where he suspected it to be, under the pillows, and then hie himself to the rear platform with the half-formed intention of leaping from the train at the risk of his life.

The rapidity with which the train was going discouraged that plan, but at the critical moment the speed of the express slackened up for some reason unknown to him, and he finally ventured to jump, getting a bad shaking up, but receiving no injury.

Then when he thought the worst of his troubles were over who should appear on the scene but the boy himself, who, he argued, must have seen him jump and had followed him.

With a chuckle of satisfaction he went on to describe how he had eluded his young pursuer in the wood, and seeing a light shining in the distance he had hurried forward to take refuge in the house he supposed the light emanated from.

"Guess my surprise on finding you here, Dick Blizzard," he concluded with a grin. "The very last person in the world I expected to run across. Well, I'm mighty glad to see you, bet your life. If Vance Vinton should find his way to this house we'll give him a reception he won't forget for the rest of his life."

Blizzard, after some hesitation, finally told the ex-salesman about the attempt he and several companions made to wreck a New York Central express train at the mouth of a certain tunnel, and how the project was defeated by Vance Vinton.

"Well, upon my word, that boy is a corker," replied Cooke. "However, I've got the better of him this time. He'll have to go back to New York and report that his case of designs was stolen from him by a white-haired old reprobate," with

a chuckle. "I fancy he won't hold his head so high as he's lately been in the habit of doing, and Appleby will change his opinion about him being such a paragon of smartness."

"I wish I could get my hands on him," growled Blizzard. "He wouldn't get back to New York in a hurry."

"What would you do to him?"

"What would I do to him, eh? Oh, I wouldn't do a thing to him," he grinned malevolently. "I'd——"

At that moment there reached their ears the sound of a racket outside the window.

CHAPTER XV.

IN WHICH OUR HERO DISCOVERS HIS PROPERTY.

Both men sprang to their feet, rushed to the window and looked out.

As they couldn't see very well through the glass what was going on Blizzard threw up the sash.

He recognized one of the two pals who were living with him at the house struggling with a boy.

"Hello, Slivers," he asked, "what's the trouble?"

"I caught this chap spyin' at yer through the winder, so I jest nabbed him."

"Isn't that the boy you were talkin' about, Cooke?" said Blizzard.

"That's him, though I can't see his face very well," answered the ex-salesman.

"Yank him into the house, Slivers. You can do it without help, can't you?" said the train-wrecker.

The rascal, securing a fresh grip around the boy's body, pushed him around the building to a back door which was opened by Blizzard with the lamp in his hand.

A moment or two later Vance found himself in the room he had been inspecting through the window, and in the presence of Cooke, who greeted him with a derisive smile.

"Glad to see you, Vinton," chuckled the ex-salesman. "This is an unexpected pleasure, upon my word."

Vance eyed him without saying a word.

"You don't seem particularly happy, my young salesman," grinned Cooke. "Did you sprain your suspenders getting off the express in a hurry?"

"I suppose it gives you a lot of satisfaction to have some fun at my expense," replied Vance with some dignity in his tone. "I don't see where you have anything on me except the possession of my property which you stole from my berth in the Pullman, and of which you can make no use whatever."

"That's enough to have on you. Your journey out West will now be a failure, and when you sneak back to the store with your yarn about how you lost your designs there will be something doing between you and the boss. You won't be the curly-headed boy any more, I'll bet a hat."

"So you went to the trouble and expense of following me out of Philadelphia just to gratify your feeling of malice against me?"

"I did it to get square on you, and I guess I've succeeded."

"Take this chap by the arm. I'm goin' to lock him into one of the rooms upstairs till we want him," said Blizzard.

With a stout rascal on either side of him Vance felt that to make any resistance would avail him little, and might result in his getting roughly handled, so he walked upstairs at Blizzard's order, and soon found himself a prisoner in an unfurnished square room at the back of the house.

His captors took the precaution to tie him to a chair which they introduced into the room for that purpose, and he was then left to his own reflections, which were not the pleasantest in the world at that moment, as the reader may guess.

Instead of yielding to despair and letting matters take their course on the ground that he couldn't help himself, Vance was no sooner alone than he began to try and release himself from the chair.

An hour passed away before he made the slightest headway.

Perseverance is certain to bring its reward in the long run, and Vance got his in the yielding of the cords about his wrists.

At last he was able to work one hand out of limbo, and the other easily followed.

Then by tugging at the loosened strands he got his right arm free.

That was enough to insure success, for thrusting his hand into his pocket he got his jack-knife into action, and the cords fell away from him in speedy succession.

That left him a free boy so far as physical action was concerned.

He had yet to escape from the room, the door of which he supposed was locked.

Vance slipped off his shoes and glided over to one of the windows.

He found no difficulty in raising the lower sash.

Looking out he judged that it was a twenty-foot drop to the ground.

He wasn't afraid to attempt that, and he was about to get out when he thought of his case of designs.

He hated to leave the house without that, yet he did not see how he could regain possession of it as things stood.

He wondered if the door really was locked.

He tip-toed over to it and found that it was not, because there was no key to it.

Suddenly a daring plan occurred to the boy's mind by which he thought he might recover his case.

He slipped across the landing and opened a door on the opposite side.

This was furnished with a double bed, chairs and other furniture, and was undoubtedly the sleeping-room for one or two of the occupants of the house.

Then he returned to the empty room.

He knew that it was right above the apartment where Cooke, Blizzard and probably Slivers were still enjoying themselves over their liquor.

Seizing a chair he raised it and then threw it on the floor, making a racket that was certain to attract attention, and no doubt would draw Blizzard and Slivers upstairs to investigate.

The open window would suggest how their missing prisoner had left the house.

Vance figured that the three men would then rush outside to recapture him.

That would give him the chance to slip downstairs and secure his case.

The idea was clever, but risky.

It worked out all right, however.

The noise brought Blizzard upstairs, by which time Vance had retreated to the room opposite.

Blizzard uttered a roar of rage when he opened the door of the vacant room and found that his prisoner had apparently decamped from the house through the open window.

He rushed to the window and looked out, then he dashed downstairs.

Confusion ensued in the room below, and then Vance heard all the men talking outside.

Vance ran across into the vacant room again and listened at the window.

He heard Blizzard direct Slivers to go in one direction, Cooke in another, while he took a third route himself.

"Now is my chance to get the case, breathed the boy.

He ran downstairs and entered the room below.

There was the case still beside the chair that had been occupied by Cooke.

To grab it and slip out of the apartment was the work of a moment with Vance.

CHAPTER XVI.

IN WHICH OUR HERO ACHIEVES BOTH FAME AND FORTUNE.

Vance retreated to a vacant room on the ground floor and waited for the men to return.

It was some time before they did.

They came back one at a time, and Blizzard was in a particularly bad humor.

Cooke did not at once notice the disappearance of the case of designs, but when he did he raised a howl.

"How could he have taken it?" said Blizzard, referring to Vance. "He made his escape through the window above."

"He must have come back while we were hunting for him and sneaked it away," answered Cooke.

"If he did that he's got an all-fired nerve," interjected Slivers. "I'll bet he wouldn't have taken the chances if he

knew that we were going to tie him down on the track used by the night freight."

"Look here, Blizzard, how far is the nearest station from here?" asked Cooke.

"Ten miles west."

"He's certain to inquire his way there. We ought to go and hang around in the vicinity of it. Then when he comes along we could grab him."

"He won't get there till after daylight, and then there'll be too many people around for us to work any game like that successfully," replied the train-wrecker.

"He'll give information against us and tell the police we're stopping at this house," said Cooke. "Then we'll all be pinched if we remain here."

Blizzard evidently had not thought of that.

He swore like a trooper when he realized what was likely to happen.

"Come on. We must make another attempt to catch him before he can find his way to the station. He's no doubt walking along the track westward by this time looking for the nearest station on the line. There's a block-house with an operator about a mile from here. He'll inquire there and will learn how far ahead the station is. We must chase after him as hard as we can. There is a chance that we may overtake him before daylight if we lose no time," said Blizzard.

The recapture of the escaped prisoner being a matter of paramount importance to the three rascals, they set out in pursuit at once, quite unconscious of the fact that the boy they wanted was in the house all the time, and had heard every word they said.

Vance chuckled to himself as he watched them start for the railroad.

He waited a good quarter of an hour before setting out, then he retraced his steps in the direction of the woods.

Although he had lost his night's rest he felt quite chipper because he had got his precious case back.

He had had a pretty strenuous experience since leaving Philadelphia, but he felt sure it would do him good, and make him more cautious in the future about taking up with chance acquaintances.

Cooke had managed to deceive him completely, but he felt satisfied that the rascal wouldn't try the game on him a second time.

Vance took occasional rests along the road during the next two hours, and then dawn began to lighten up the eastern sky.

A turn in the road brought a good-sized village into view a few miles away, and the people were up and about by the time he reached it.

He stopped into the first store he came to and inquired his way to the nearest station in that direction.

He found it was at the town of Dundee, twelve miles away.

"I'll have to hire a rig to take me there," he thought.

He went to the small hotel in the place and registered for breakfast.

Then he made arrangements with the proprietor for a horse and buggy to carry him to Dundee.

He reached the railroad town at ten o'clock.

He went directly to the station and told the agent about his night's experiences.

"My suitcase is on the Pullman car 'Minnehaha.' The train must be within a few hours run of Chicago by this time. It is due there about three this afternoon. A despatch ought to be sent to the Pullman conductor telling him to hand the suitcase over to the baggage-master at Chicago when he gets there, so I can reclaim it on my arrival."

The agent promised to have the despatch sent in time to reach the conductor.

Vance thanked the agent for his courtesy, telephoned the town police about Blizzard, Cooke and Slivers, who, he said, might be captured in the neighborhood of the house down the road if no time was lost, and caught the express for Pittsburgh at 11:30.

He reached Chicago in due time, recovered his suitcase, and after a day's stay in the Windy City left for Springfield.

While at Chicago he wrote a full account of his stirring adventure on the road to Mr. Appleby.

Vance also wrote a full account of his experiences to Gertie, and he filled up a few extra pages with something that was nearer his heart.

On Vance's arrival at Springfield he went at once to the Springfield Furniture Manufacturing Company and had his first interview with the general manager.

The order he had to place was such an important and expensive one that he received the greatest consideration from the manager.

He was shown over the establishment, which occupied a block of ground, and made a careful investigation as to the capability of the house to turn out the order in the high-class way he required it to be executed.

Vance had a second interview with the manager before he finally decided to give the order to the establishment.

He received a written guarantee that the work would be made exactly according to his designs and specifications.

He found that the Springfield Company was apparently able to turn out everything except the special upholstery material for the saloon set.

It was necessary to have that manufactured at Lingerie, in France, which has a world-wide reputation for delicate and expensive work of the kind.

So Vance, after starting the order, returned to New York to enter into negotiations with the French house.

The designs and specifications were forwarded to Lingerie and the boy impatiently awaited a reply from the other side.

It came in due time.

The French establishment agreed to fill the order to the letter, but the price was a heavy one.

Before giving the order Vance called on Mr. Ward and told him that the salon set would cost him \$11,000 more than the original estimate if the upholstery material was made according to his idea.

He received permission to go ahead and the order was accordingly sent to France.

The furniture was ready for delivery two months before the house was ready for it.

When it was finally received in New York, every piece carefully packed in a special crate, Vance personally attended to its delivery and unpacking at the expensive dwelling on upper Fifth Avenue.

When it was placed in the different rooms awaiting its reception Mr. Ward was on hand to view it, and he admitted that it was all that Vance had claimed for it.

He invited a number of reporters and artists to inspect the house and its wonderful furniture and imported gems of art, and the printed accounts, illustrated with photographs, created a sensation among connoisseurs.

Many multi-millionaires, after seeing the results of his genius, commissioned him to design furniture for them, though on a less expensive plan.

The result was that Vance found enough work to set up a studio in his special line, while still continuing his connection with Mr. Appleby.

It was about this time that Cooke, Blizzard and Slivers were captured in St. Louis and brought on to New York.

The former was prosecuted by Mr. Appleby while Blizzard and his associate were put through by the New York Central Railroad Company.

The three were convicted on Vance's evidence and received long terms in Sing Sing.

Vance was on the highroad to both fame and fortune when he asked Banker Garnett and Mrs. Garnett for the hand of their daughter in marriage, and received a favorable reply from them.

A few months later he and Gertie were married and spent their honeymoon in Europe, where they did not fail to visit Lingerie and inspect the establishment that had furnished the upholstery for the salon set in the Ward mansion.

To-day Vance's name is a household word in the artistic furniture trade, and everybody who knows him refers to him as the young salesman who made his mark.

Our next issue will contain "TED, THE BROKER'S BOY; OR, STARTING OUT FOR HIMSELF."

Send Postal for Our Free Catalogue.

HELP YOUR COUNTRY!

"The foundations of our national policy will be laid in the pure and immutable principles of private morality."—George Washington's First Inaugural Address.

"The man who does not give his fullest cooperation to his country in this hour will die unhappy."—Woodrow Wilson, President of the United States.

"This flag which we honor and under which we serve is an emblem of our unity, our power, our thought and purpose as a nation. It has no other character than that which we give it from generation to generation. The choices are ours. It floats in majestic silence above the hosts that execute those choices whether in peace or in war."—Woodrow Wilson, President of the United States.

"The liberty loan should be first in the mind of every citizen now as the most pressing step toward victory and the establishment of a lasting peace. The obligation to subscribe rests especially upon the members of the League to Enforce Peace. Victory means in their view something more than even the success of the United States and our allies. Service to the league is inseparable from service to our country, and the way to serve our country just at this time is to buy her bonds."—William H. Taft, ex-President of the United States.

"Wars can not be fought without money. The very first step in this war, the most effective step that we could take, is to provide money for its conduct. * * *

"This money is not going to be taken out of the country. All of this financing is a matter of shifting credits; it is not going to involve any loss of gold; it is not going to involve any loss of values. These moneys are going to be paid back into circulation, paid back properly into the channels of business and circulated and recirculated to take care of the abnormal prosperity of the country, a prosperity that will be greater in the present year than ever before in our history."—Secretary McAdoo in a speech at Des Moines in June.

DUTY AND INTEREST.

Every holder of a Liberty Loan Bond and every prospective purchaser in the next issue of the Liberty Loan Bonds should bear in mind that the purchase of a Liberty Loan Bond helps the Government

of the United States, helps the citizens of the United States and helps the purchaser as a citizen as well as being at the same time a splendid private investment.

Moreover every purchaser of a Liberty Loan Bond serves humanity itself.

One can not serve his country or serve his fellow citizens without serving himself, his family, and posterity. The purpose of the Liberty Loan Bond is to make the world safe for Democracy, and every purchaser of a bond does something to that great end by which not only the present but future generations are benefited.

AIR CORPS OF 150,000 MEN NEEDED.

Mr. Howard E. Coffin, of the advisory commission of the Council of National Defense and chairman of the aircraft production board, has issued the following statement:

Dominance of the air has become vital to the success of any and all military operations. Both batteries and troops are under the modern conditions of war, wholly dependent for effective direction upon the eyes of the air service looking down upon the field of operations from thousands of feet up in the clouds. This dominance of the air is vital, but may be achieved only through the presence of aircraft of all kinds and in overwhelming numbers. This dominance may be achieved only when pilots are available of proper quality and in sufficient numbers. Moreover, manufacturing equipment for quantity production of machines must be available.

America is the last great reservoir in the world, not only for men of the right quality but for the materials and the equipments for quantity production as well. The permanent supremacy of the air must be America's greatest single contribution to the cause.

Whatever we do must be done quickly. All world's records for industrial development in a new art must be broken. Whatever of crimes there may be later laid at the door of the aircraft production board, that of inaction must not be one of them. Minor mistakes here and there because of speed may be forgiven, but lost time through inaction, never.

One hundred and fifty thousand officers and enlisted men, an army of the air great as our standing army of only a few months ago, will be needed. The task before us is a stupendous one. It is a task which appeals to our American people. All problems to be solved are industrial ones. The resources to be called into play are not such as will be used to any great extent in other lines of war work. American industry can make no greater contribution to the cause than through the establishment of the supremacy of the air.

OUT FOR EVERYTHING

OR

THE BOY WHO TOOK CHANCES

By GASTON GARNE

(A SERIAL STORY.)

CHAPTER XX (Continued).

Toot! It was much nearer now, and then Chug, seeing the little group in front of the hotel, ran slowly up.

As he brought the car to a stop the head constable darted out of a doorway, darted forward and leaped in beside Chug.

"You're my prisoner, Bailey," said the officer, briefly. "The charge is helping a fugitive to escape from me."

"Well, I'll be—blowed!" gasped Chug, innocently, and then immediately added:

"I beg your pardon, ladies!"

"Good night, ladies!" called Justice Helmsford, stepping from the hotel.

"Hold on, please, Mr. Helmsford!" Mrs. Fulham broke in, hastily. "I think we shall need you once more."

"Eh, madam?"

"Here is another young man who wants bail."

Chug had taken it all coolly enough. Now he went through the forms of being admitted to bail as indifferently as if he were not much interested in the matter.

John Craddock, looking as if he would burst, waited until the justice was through.

Then he demanded brusquely:

"Is this charge true, Bailey?"

"Partly," Chug admitted, cheerfully. "I took a party away who was in a hurry."

"A fugitive from justice escaped in my car!" blazed Craddock.

"Why, I didn't ask him the nature of his business, sir," Chug slowly admitted. "He seemed to be in a hurry—that's all."

"Where did you take that fugitive?" demanded the head constable, breaking in.

"I don't believe I'll say any more," Chug retorted, coolly.

"You'll have to," stormed the officer.

"I don't believe that," sniffed Chug. "I've been arrested on a charge. I'm not obliged to say anything about that charge until my case comes up in court, anyway."

"Where did you take that fugitive?" the head constable persisted.

"I've already told you," Chug retorted, "that I've quit talking for the present."

"Answer the officer!" stormed John Craddock.

"Not part of my duty as chauffeur, sir," Chug Bailey replied, firmly.

"You no longer are my chauffeur," snapped Mr. Craddock.

"As you wish, sir. I've planned to make a change soon, anyway."

"Will you answer my question?" insisted the constable.

"No, I won't!" Chug rejoined. "I've told you that already. I don't mean to say any kind of a word that could be used against me. Mr. Craddock, shall I drive the car home, sir, before quitting your employ?"

"I'll take the machine home myself," was the cold answer. "You can come to-morrow for your clothes and your wages."

"Thank you. Good-night, sir."

This time Mr. Craddock lifted his hat very stiffly to the ladies before walking over to the car and driving off.

"I hate to hurt him," quivered Ned. "He was the first good friend we had."

"He'll understand later on," Chug predicted, confidently.

Very little was said there before the coachman and footman.

But the four entered the carriage and were driven toward the Fulham home.

CHAPTER XXI.

A NEW TRICK BY OLD ENEMIES.

"I was pretty sure you'd be all right, Chug."

"And I don't care a hang whether I am or not!" Bailey retorted, defiantly.

"Yes, you do!"

"Well, you know what I mean."

"What do you mean?"

"Why, Ned, you are the fellow I used to talk to about the need of pluck. You're the fellow to whom I used to preach the gospel of not being afraid to take chances. And now you're nothing but pluck. If there's a chance on earth too big for you to take, I'd like to see what that chance looks like."

"Well?"

"I mean, Ned, that if you can smilingly face all you're up against, I guess I can endure the little things that are thrown in my path. The lawyer says that you haven't any show to keep out of prison. And as for me, he says——"

"That's what I am so glad about, Chug. I didn't put you in such a terrible scrape."

The two boys were talking in low tones in a room in the Fulham house.

It was nearly noon.

That forenoon the Fulham family lawyer, Mr. Grice, had been there, and had been earnestly consulted.

To our hero the lawyer did not hold out any hope of escaping the penitentiary.

Chug's case, however, was different. Chug could say that he had acted impulsively on his friend's request and without waiting to understand what it was that he was doing.

A good lawyer would be able to clear Chug before the average jury.

In the meantime Bailey had persisted in his refusal to say where he had left Grace's uncle.

But Palgrave had not been found.

That much the public knew. What else was known about the fugitive was confined to the two boys and to Grace and her mother.

Mrs. Fulham had telegraphed for her husband to return from New York. He was due on the following day.

Tap! came a knock at the door.

"Mrs. Fulham would like to see the young gentlemen in the library," was the message that the servant brought.

Not a moment did Warren and his chum lose in presenting themselves at the library door.

Mrs. Fulham was there. So was Grace. But there was a third party with them whose presence made Chug start uneasily.

It was the head constable of the village.

"Not more trouble?" queried Ned, smiling and blithe.

"I don't know," the officer rejoined, rather sourly. "Some folks would think so. You don't seem to take it that way."

"What's new?" Ned persisted, cheerfully.

"Two of Slippery Dan's gang have been caught."

"Good!"

"You think so?"

"Why, of course I do," Ned vibrated.

"They've told everything," went on the officer.

"Well, what have they told?"

"They have confessed," resumed the constable, severely, "that you, Ned Warren, put up the Craddock robbery, and one other with them. That you agreed to help them, and that you turned on them in the hope of securing a bigger reward for seeming honesty."

"What are you trying to tell me?" Ned insisted, a trifle stiffly.

"That's the confession!"

"This is by all odds the silliest business that you've been engaged in around here yet," our hero retorted, scornfully. "When are you going to stop believing in fairy tales and Mother Goose?"

"You've got your nerve still with you," the constable admitted. "But you'll have to come along with me, just the same."

"On that absurd story?"

"Yes; and you can make it out as absurd as you want to before a jury!"

"Talk about a limit!" gasped Chug. "Who'd ever have thought that Slippery Dan's crew, however badly they wanted to get square, would give themselves up as a part of their scheme?"

"They didn't give themselves up," retorted the head constable, with dignity. "We caught 'em after a mighty clever bit of work."

"You can tell that to the jury, too," leered Chug. "That you country cops, who for months couldn't stop Slippery Dan from operating under your noses, finally became brilliant enough to bag two of the gang just at the moment when the gang had a 'confession' that it wanted to make! Bosh!"

"You're all ready to come along, aren't you, Warren?" asked the officer.

"It isn't necessary," Mrs. Fulham broke in. "I have telephoned Justice Helmsford, and he is now on his way here to take bail."

And so, twenty minutes later, the constable had departed, and Ned was once more free, though with another penitentiary charge hanging over his head.

"It has been nothing but trouble for you since you began to serve us," cried Grace, tears springing to her bright eyes as she shook Ned's hand.

"Oh, taking chances is my chosen specialty, you know," laughed the boy. "Anyway, I haven't been through the tenth part yet of what I would go through for you and your mother. There's a bit more that I've got to do, too, before we are through."

He and Grace wandered out into the broad grounds on this beautiful warm day.

Chug, a little lonely, truth to tell, at no longer having a car to tend, strolled off by himself and went to sleep under the shade of a bush.

Luncheon was served by and by.

Then a lonely afternoon set in.

Usually the Fulham house was a center of neighborly social life.

But to-day no carriages of other wealthy folk in the neighborhood turned in through the great gates.

"There's a messenger getting off his wheel at the gate," cried Grace. "He's from the club, too."

They walked briskly down to meet the messenger, who, handing Ned a note, touched his cap and was off.

"It's from the secretary of the Country Club," announced Warren, dryly. "He says that the board of governors ask me to consider my honorary membership as cancelled."

(To be continued.)

CURRENT NEWS

Mrs. John Lusk, who lives near Shelbyville, Ind., was running from a large blacksnake which had attacked her, when she fell, dislocating her left elbow and shattering the bones in the arm. Mrs. Lusk saw the snake making a raid on her poultry. Arming herself with a hoe she started after the reptile, but when it turned to strike at her she fled.

A hundred years ago a Rocky River farmer dumped a wagon load of potatoes into the Cuyahoga River because tight-fisted Clevelanders would not pay him more than 3 cents a bushel for them. Tom Kelly got wildly excited the other day because retail grocers, deluged by an immense increase in carlot receipts from the Dixie potato belt, cut the price from a mere \$4.40 a bushel to \$3.60.

"My son is with the American boys in France and I have no one to support me," pleaded Mrs. John M. Grant, who is blind, before the City Council, Columbus, O., while seeking permission to sing on the street for the pennies that may be given her. The Council had just accepted a new anti-begging ordinance. As a result of Mrs. Grant's appeal, which moved several of the Councilmen to tears, the ordinance may be modified so blind persons may seek alms.

By taking medicine without protest during a recent illness, J. B. Fox, of Endis, Okla., the two-year-old lineal descendant of Betsy Ross, designer of the American flag, earned money with which he paid for a Red Cross membership. His brother, Bernell, aged eleven, earned his membership by carrying papers. The third brother, Dick, seven years old, got his money by selling garden truck. The mother of the boys, before her marriage, was Miss Jessie Pearl Ross, fourth in line from Betsy Ross.

Metal obtained from the two bells stolen from the Catholic church at Fingal, Barnes County, N. D., one night recently and from the church at Saunders, four miles south of Fargo, the following evening, will net the thieves about \$1,500, according to State Architect Sam Crabbe. Bell metal is made of copper, brass, bronze and aluminum and some tin, which have soared in price since the war. Bell metal now should bring between 60 and 75 cents a pound, Mr. Crabbe said. It is believed the thieves are making Fargo their headquarters, and that after robbing the church at Fingal they worked their way east to Saunders and then into this city.

A machine that indicates the amount due in every man's pay envelope the instant it is wanted is among the latest office devices. This machine, it is said, gives the products of payrolls and distributes job

costs in far less time than the most expert clerk can deduct them by pencil and pad. A twist of the wrist gives the product of the most involved payroll fractions—whatever the rate per hour or the hours worked may be. Perhaps most remarkable of all is the fact that the machine does not compute products; instead, it has 18,340 computed products which cover all conventional payroll figures. The machine occupies little space and is compact and portable.

In the addressing of envelopes on a typewriter a considerable amount of time and labor is expended in feeding the envelopes into the machine. This ordinarily requires three operations: Picking up an envelope from a pile, placing it in the machine, and straightening it. Fitting all machines and sold at a reasonable price, there has of late been introduced a machine which automatically feeds envelopes into a typewriter, one by one, and each in perfect alignment. The machine takes one hundred or more envelopes at a time, and feeds them automatically so that there is always an envelope in position.

To meet any possible coal shortage in the West next winter, more extensive use of fuel wood from the National forests is urged by the Government's foresters. The supervisors of the 153 National forests will afford all possible facilities to local residents wishing to obtain cord wood, which settlers may obtain free for their home use, and which is sold at low rates to persons cutting and hauling in order to sell to others. During the last fiscal year more than 30,000 permits for the free use of National forest timber, mainly in the form of fuel wood, were taken out by local residents. The amount of timber involved approximated 250,000 cords.

Arrangements have been completed by a fish corporation for the erection of a number of cold storage plants at various places on the coast of Newfoundland. The principal plant will be erected in the city of St. John and will occupy ground space of about 245 feet by 90 feet. The plan calls for a six-story building, but only three stories will be erected at present. The basement will be of concrete, and above this the walls will be constructed of local brick, of which about 725,000 will be required. The lower flat will contain the freezing apparatus, having a refrigerating capacity of 150 tons, where fresh fish will be frozen in about two hours. The ammonia plant for making artificial ice for preserving bait and for use on cars and steamers will be on the same floor. The second and third stories will be used for storage purposes. The entire building will have a capacity of about 10,000,000 pounds of frozen fish.

BEN AND THE BANKER'S SON

—OR—

THE TROUBLES OF A RICH BOY'S DOUBLE

By ED KING

(A SERIAL STORY)

CHAPTER XXIII (Continued).

And so they continued to talk.

Fierce as they had all been for making an immediate sally upon Rio Vista, they were now seeing all sorts of objections in the way.

"I'll tell yer what, boys," said Pop Dusenbury; "everybody around here knows me, but nobody dreams dat I have a record in de past. De only feller I really fear is Detective Bob Bender, and it's not likely he is anywhere about these parts. Let's all sneak up to de woods, and while youse two waits with dis lad, I'll go boldly to de house and ask for his nibs. I'll tell de servant what answers de door dat I want to see him about a boat privilege at de foot of de Rio Vista estate, or some excuse like dat—see?"

"And what den?" demanded Pat. "Blame me ef I see jest where your point comes in."

"It comes in dis way: If I can jest get his ear I'll put a flea in it. I'll tell him dat we've got his double, and dat if he don't come down to de woods an' have a chin wid us we are going to get him out of dere some old way and put de double back in his place—see?"

"Not so bad," said the Kid, lighting a cigarette.

"I t'ink it might be made to work if you don't slop over, Pop."

"Oh, youse kin trust me for dat. I guess I know when to talk an' when to hold me jaw. Is it a go?"

"Yair," said Pat.

"I don't see no better way," chimed in the Kid.

"And now, young feller," said Dusenbury, turning to Ben, "had we best leave you locked in here or take you along with us? What do you say, boys?"

"Oh, he goes, of course," replied Pat, promptly.

"If we leave him here we take chances on his escaping us. If we lug him along an' he tries to escape I'll put a bullet into him, dat's all."

And so it was decreed by these interesting arbiters of Ben's fate that he should go along with them.

It was not until they got into the woods that Pat suddenly thought of Jack Fox.

"Say, by time, what if we meet dat detective?" he cried.

"Dat's so," said the Kid. "Look here, young feller, what were you doing along wit' him, anyhow?"

"Same as I'm doing with you," replied Ben, wearily. "He and his partner captured me after I got

away from you last night. They kept me a prisoner and were going to use me to make Ben Leslie tell where he hid dat stolen cash."

Ben let it all c

He had grown different.

Whichever way things went, it seemed to spell trouble for him always.

He was sick and tired of it all, and his only thought now was how to make his escape.

"It's back to the woods, for me once I do get away," he resolved.

And then came the thought of Alice, and he was not quite so sure that it would be back to the woods, after all.

Meanwhile his companions were talking as usual.

"Who's de other detective?" asked the Kid.

"His name is Firman," said Ben.

"Bill Firman!" cried Pop Dusenbury. "Gee, he knows me, too!"

"Did he go up to de big house?" inquired Pat.

"Yes," said Ben.

"He can't be dere now, anyway," said the Kid. "I say, let de scheme stand as we fixed it."

They had now reached the scene of Ben's capture. Pat peered out on the road and declared that he could see nothing of Jack Fox by the gate.

"I give him a good crack," he remarked, "but I guess he got up and skinned out, all right. Now den, Pop, if yer a-going, why, go."

"All right, boys," replied the old rascal.

Crossing the road, he walked boldly in through the gateway.

They watched him until he had covered about half the distance to the house, where the road turned, and there he vanished among the trees.

"Pop's a boid," said Pat. "He'll get dere, all right. What'll yer bet he don't fetch Ryan back wit' him?"

"I'm willing to bet dat he don't, if dat's what yer mean," replied the Kid. "I'll bet he gets trun down."

"You do, hey? You agreed to de scheme, all right."

"I agreed to it 'cause I didn't wanter kick. I hain't got sich a lot of faith in it, jest de same. Have you got anny chewin' terbacker about yer, Patsy? I'll trouble yer for de pape if yer hev."

They continued to talk in this strain, when all of

a sudden they saw Pop Dusenbury come sprinting down the driveway as though all the detectives on the New York force were at his heels.

"Hully Gee! What's de matter wit' Pop?" exclaimed Pat.

"Jim's set de dogs onto him!" cried the Kid.

"We'd better skin out den."

"Hold on! I don't hear no dogs a-barkin'! Here he comes!"

Dusenbury dashed in among them, all out of breath.

"What's de matter?" demanded Pat.

"Bender!" panted Pop.

"Bob Bender?"

"Yair. I seen him at de winder, an' I t'ink he seen me."

"An' like a fool you run?"

"Didn't run a step till I got outer sight. Den you bet I sprinted to beat de band."

"Do you t'ink he's after you?"

"Couldn't say. I t'ink we'd better do something quick."

"We'll get back to de boathouse."

"Not on your life!" squeaked Pop. "Dat is de fust place he'll be lookin' for us."

"Den what shall we do?" demanded the Kid.

"I'll tell yer," said Pop. "Let's skin up to de old Van Duyn house and lay low dere for a spell. It's near home, I know, but it's de last place dey'd t'ink of lookin' for us in—see?"

"Where is de old Van Duyn house?" asked Pat.

"Follow me," said Pop.

Once more they got on the move, and this time they were heading for the deserted farmhouse where Charley Taylor had his adventure at the old well.

But Pop Dusenbury need not have been alarmed.

Bob Bender had not seen him from the window, after all.

Upon arriving at the house, Alice summoned the butler and asked that her brother be sent for.

"He is not in the house, miss," was the reply.

The butler seemed nervous and ill at ease.

"Where is he, then?" demanded Alice.

"He went away with a man who came here a little while ago," was the reply. "I saw them walking about the grounds, talking to eath other. I don't know where they are now."

"Well, tell him I want to see him in the library as soon as he comes in," said Alice; "and send Mrs. Wilton to me now."

"I'm afraid I can't do that, miss," replied the butler, looking still more troubled. "Mrs. Wilton is very sick."

"Sick! She was well enough last night."

"I know, miss. Really, I don't like to tell it, but I must even if I lose my place, for I wouldn't stay here, anyhow, the way things are going."

"What do you mean, Felton? Speak out?"

"It's Mr. Ben, miss. He has been acting shameful, and the drink that's in him don't excuse it. He knocked Mrs. Wilton down and kicked her so she had to take to her bed. He threw a bottle at

my head what would have brained me had it hit me. It's dreadful, miss. I don't wonder you went away last night. I give you warning. I won't stay here another day."

"Leave me, Felton," said Alice, her face red with shame.

"You see, Mr. Bender!" she cried, after Felton had closed the door. "Can I live with such a man, even if he is my own brother?"

"You certainly cannot, Miss Leslie," was the reply. "Your life would not be safe."

"Exactly so. I not only cannot, but I will not. I have endured enough. This wretch killed my dear mother with his wickedness; he has brought my poor father to his grave. He won't kill me, though. If I give up the whole estate, I leave this house with you, unless you can prevail upon him to leave it, and I shall never return."

"There will be no such necessity, Miss Leslie. Leave your brother to me. If you are willing that I may make a threat of Sing Sing a big stick to down him with, I shall soon succeed in bringing him to terms."

"You can use it if you like," said Alice, bitterly. "You may put him there if you will. I shall not interfere. Remain here until my return, Mr. Bender. I must see this unfortunate woman at once."

Alice swept from the library then, and Bob Bender sank into a chair.

He had scarcely seated himself when a carriage came whirling up to the door, and an instant later the bell was heard to ring.

"Doctor O'Grady asking for Mr. Leslie, sir," said the butler, looking into the library.

Bob Bender sprang to his feet.

"Show the doctor in," he said.

"I'll do it," he muttered. "Here's big stick No. 2!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

CONCLUSION.

Enter Doctor O'Grady!

Probably he stood the most startled medico in New York when he saw Bob Bender facing him.

For, as it happened, Bob had once had occasion to arrest the doctor for crooked work, and he was a man whom the sanitarium keeper thoroughly feared, seeing that an old indictment still hung over his head.

"How are you, O'Grady?" demanded Bob, coolly. "What the mischief brings you here?"

"I didn't come to see you, then," retorted the doctor, turning pale.

"Certainly not. You came here for one of two reasons, both known to me."

"What do you mean?"

"You came here either to attempt to blackmail the false Ben Leslie, or to play the same game on the real Ben Leslie—whichever one you might happen to find installed here as the son of this house."

Of course Bob Bender had hit it.

(To be continued.)

NEWS OF THE DAY

SIMPLE DIET MAKES LONGEVITY.

Mrs. Marion Sparks Banister of No. 5917 Maple Avenue, St. Louis, Mo., celebrated her 100th birthday the other day. She attributes her longevity to the fact that she has subsisted upon a simple diet, she has been cheerful and unworried in the face of adversity. She is an inveterate tea drinker, and her favorite dessert is old English plum pudding from a recipe said to have been made famous by Queen Victoria. She drinks tea for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

RUBBER BOOTS SAVED HIM.

The fine new large barn on the C. B. Lamb farm west of Charlotte, Mich. in Carmel Township, which is occupied by Grant Kiplinger, was struck by lightning and the siding was torn off from top to bottom on both gables, the barn being about 50 feet in height.

Mr. Kiplinger was standing in the barn at the time, and the stable doors within two feet of him, were slivered and he was stunned but not hurt by the shock. The fact that he was wearing rubber boots probably saved him from instant death.

The barn fortunately did not catch fire. It is 40 by 80 feet in size, cost \$3,000 and is being built to replace the large barn destroyed by fire last autumn.

HOW TO TEST DIAMONDS.

The public is frequently deceived in regard to the sale of jewelry and precious stones, and the authorities have issued a statement upon the accurate testing of diamonds.

When a diamond is quite clean and dry, the following experiment should be tried. Place on the surface a tiny drop of water and then take a needle or pin and try to move the drop about. If the diamond is genuine, the drop can be rolled about intact. On the other hand, where the gem is an imitation, the water spreads directly it is touched with the needle-point.

Another very good test may be carried out with a tumbler of water. Into this put the suspected article and examine its appearance. A real diamond will show up in the water with a startling clearness, and it can never be confounded with the water. On the other hand, the imitation looks indefinite and it is sometimes difficult to see it at all.

CAMELS DESPISE BULLETS.

The Camel Transport Corps, although not exactly a fighting force, has been in action and received its baptism of fire, says a correspondent of "The Manchester Guardian." No shell or bullet can excite the stolid, contemplative animal; but it might have been

expected that the camel drivers, unarmed and untrained for war, would have run for it at the first sign of attack. Yet, in fact, most of them responded admirably to the call of their British officers and stuck to their animals while bullets whizzed around. With characteristic simplicity, or it may be obstinacy, when told to bring in their camels to shelter they insisted on taking with them the blankets which are issued to every man, lest they should be stolen in their absence. Some wanted to mount a hill under fire to get their money from their tents.

The contempt which a Soudanese stalwart feels for the modern long-range fighting was expressed by one head-man—the more warlike Soudanese regularly act as head-men over the Egyptian fellaheen—who remarked, as the shells burst, that in his country they "fought it out with knives."

COILS OF SMUGGLED COPPER IN OIL TANK.

A sharp-nosed, sinister-looking, gray craft, lean as a greyhound, raced down the harbor recently and brought up alongside the Norwegian tanker Conrad Mohr just as the latter was starting to breast the long rollers of the ocean on her way to Norway. The gray boat was a United States torpedo destroyer, and when she had stopped the Conrad Mohr a young man with a business-like and alert manner clambered swiftly up the companion-way ladder.

The man was Acting Deputy Collector Gass, and he and other Government agents made a careful search of the Norwegian. She had dropped down toward the open sea from her Bayonne pier, and in a few minutes would have been outside Sandy Hook.

Gass and the revenue officers probed the oil tanks while the ship's officers looked on. With a boat-hook Gass got a grip on a copper cable and hauled it forth. Investigation showed that there was 10,000 feet of heavily insulated cable, neatly coiled. Copper is contraband of war, and the cable did not appear on the ship's manifest. Copper is at a premium in Germany now, and government agents are wondering if they have uncovered a big plot to smuggle copper into Germany. For a long time their attention has been closely occupied with Scandinavian boats certain of which are known to have carried mail which was not delivered through the customary channels. Only last week a Swede was detained for slipping a packet of letters to a steward on a Scandinavian boat.

Gass ordered the ship back to Bayonne and informed her captain, Peter Einarsen, and the chief engineer, John Larsen, that they would have to appear before a United States Commissioner, charged with conspiracy to defraud the United States by filing a false manifest. They were held under bail of \$25,000 each for examination.

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Good Current News Articles

George Rimsky, an assistant section foreman for the Jersey Central Railroad, is the most successful trout fisherman in the Lehigh Valley this season. Almost daily he catches the limit allowed per day, which is forty.

Miss Dagne Brathen, a member of the 1917 graduating class of the Hayward High School, has a perfect mark for regular school attendance, as she did not miss a day, nor was tardy, from September in 1905, when she entered the kindergarten of the local schools, until this year, when she received a high school diploma.

When E. B. Griswold started to recruit his employees recently to reopen his pencil factory here he discovered that all the girls who had formerly worked for him were married. He will have to find an entirely new force. During the three years that he has operated the factory twenty-six girls who worked for him have married.

Michael Schiller of Freedom, Mich., is in receipt of a postal card, mailed to him for the second time from Imlay City. Schiller first received the card the day before the cyclone struck his farm recently. The wind carried the card northward, till it finally landed sixty miles away in the yard of an Imlay City man, who considerately mailed it back to Mr. Schiller.

J. D. Gwin of Sharon, S. C., has a "grandfather" clock. He is able to trace its age back 127 years, and is of the opinion that it is much older. The works were brought over from England and the frame of black walnut, inlaid with maple, was made in this country by a cabinetmaker named Samuel Gill. The clock has never ceased to keep accurate time, not a penny has been spent on it for repairs of any sort, and its present condition is excellent.

The wheat harvest in Australia for the present season of 1916-1917 is the largest on record. One result of such favorable conditions is that the European field mice in this colony have increased to such an extent that they are doing enormous damage throughout the states of New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia. Their attacks upon the wheat lying stacked in bags awaiting shipment alone threaten loss to the extent of millions of dollars. To save this wheat all the stacks are being surrounded with mouse-proof fences of galvanized iron with openings left every 16 feet, in which are placed kerosene tins, sunk in the ground with 6 inches of water in the bottom. The mice already in the stacks when this miniature fortification is put in place must go out for water, and when they try to do so they fall into the tins. At one country railroad station nearly ten thousand mice were caught in this way in a single night. The experiment of driving the pests out of a stack by using the fumes of carbon bisulfide has also been tried with some success. In some districts the mice are dying in large numbers from skin diseases.

Grins and Chuckles

"Harry is employed by a railroad company now, I understand?" "Yes; he has charge of the puzzle department." "The what?" "He makes out the time-tables."

"What are you going to bring your boy up as, Ezekiel?" "Think I'll fit him for a position in the Weather Bureau." "Why so?" "Oh, he's always complaining about his corns hurting him when a storm's coming."

"Does the man drink," asked a prospective employer of the solid citizen who had recommended a friend for a position. "He drinks like a fish." "Why do you recommend him, then?" "That's why—a fish drinks only water."

Physician (looking into his ante-room, where a number of patients are waiting)—Who has been waiting longest? Tailor (who has called to present a bill)—I have, doctor. I delivered the clothes to you three years ago.

"When that bad boy threw stones at you why didn't you come and tell me instead of throwing back at him?" said the good little boy's pious mother. "Tell you?" said the good little boy. "Why, you couldn't hit a barn door."

"Who gave the bride away?" asked Mrs. Jones of her daughter, who had just returned from the wedding. "Her little brother," replied the daughter; "he stood up in the middle of the ceremony and yelled, 'Hurrah, Blanche, you've got him at last.'"

NED DUMFREY

By Col. Ralph Fenton

Mike Dumfrey was a longshoreman. Finding it difficult to get steady employment, he shipped as a green hand for a whaling voyage on the Walrus.

When Mike sailed, he left behind him in New York a wife and three children, one an infant.

He gave his wife the greater part of his advance pay, and for some time she managed to live comfortably, for she was a hearty, industrious woman.

Her two oldest children were of considerable service to her. Bridget, her daughter, was a careful, intelligent girl, large enough to take care of the baby, and Ned, though he was only ten years old, full of mischief and fond of play, was made useful in various ways.

For a while after the Walrus sailed, she was heard of from time to time. Then vessel after vessel came from the South Pacific Ocean, where she was supposed to be cruising, but brought no news of her.

The winter set in, and to make matters worse, Mrs. Dumfrey slipped and fell upon the icy pavement, injuring herself so severely that she was confined to her bed for several months.

Ned behaved like a hero. Procuring a brush and blacking, he made himself a box, and was out early and late in all kinds of weather, shining boots and shoes.

He was so industrious that he overworked himself, and that, with exposure, made him sick.

Mrs. Dumfrey's little savings melted away, and before spring came she had to sell most of her furniture, and part of the clothes of herself and children to get food.

Being unable to pay for apartments in a tenement house, she moved into a shanty on the rocks near Ninety-sixth street.

The shanty was a miserable affair, built of old goods boxes, and covered with pieces of sheet iron.

The fireplace was made of pieces of unhewn rock, and the top of the chimney was a barrel plastered on the inside with mud. Mrs. Dumfrey rented it for a dollar a month.

Thankful that Ned and herself had recovered their health, she cheerfully went to work taking in washing and occasionally going out to do a day's house-cleaning. She left her new address at the office of the owners of the Walrus.

Ned continued blacking boots and shoes, but found time to become quite an expert at pitching pennies. Early one morning, about six months after they went to live in the shanty, Mrs. Dumfrey shook him to awaken him.

Ned got up, and after breakfast took his box and went down-town, but he could scarcely get anything to do. At five o'clock in the afternoon he had only made twenty-five cents.

He was standing on Broadway, in front of a hotel, when Jim Stanton, a well-known sporting man, ac-

companied by two companions, came out, got into a carriage, and drove off.

Just after they left, Ned saw something sparkling in the gutter. It was a breastpin.

He put it in his pocket and resumed his lookout for customers.

In the meantime, Jim Stanton had not proceeded but a short distance when he suddenly discovered his loss.

Stanton was very much worried, and when he got to the hotel, said to several persons that were lounging around the door:

"I've lost a breastpin, either in the hotel, or as I was getting in the hack, and I'll give five hundred dollars to any one who will return it to me."

Ned was standing near by and heard the remark. Taking the diamond out of his pocket, he held it up and asked:

"Is this yer breastpin?"

"Yes, said Staton, eagerly, taking the pin. "I'm in luck this time sure. Where did you get it?"

"It was layin' in ther street, an' I picked it up."

"Well, you are a made boy. I offered five hundred dollars for the recovery of the pin, and you get it."

Telling Ned to follow him, Stanton went into the hotel, procured paper and pen, asked Ned what his name was and where he lived, and then wrote a statement about the finding of the diamond.

Having affixed his name and address to the paper, Stanton enclosed it with five hundred dollars in an envelope, and handed it to Ned.

Ned thanked him, and left the hotel.

Alf Sims, a heavy-set man with a villainous countenance, paid close attention to what was said and done.

So, when Ned left the hotel, Sims followed and kept him in sight. Sims lived on Fortieth street, and, as Ned went in that direction, he was in no hurry to overtake the unsuspecting boy.

Ned struck into Third avenue, and at the corner of Fortieth street was overtaken by Sims, who said:

"Hello, bub! Would you like to make a quarter?"

"What do you want me to do for it?" asked Ned.

"I want you to carry a letter up to Eighty-fifth street and Third avenue. All you will have to do will be to leave it, and I will pay you in advance."

"Where's ther letter? I'm goin' that way."

Sims led the way to a dilapidated-looking house, opened the door with a latch-key, and bade Ned come in.

The moment Ned stepped into the corridor Sims locked the door.

Ned followed him to a back room upon the second floor, upon entering which his conductor was asked by a woman with:

"Well, Alf, did you make a raise?"

"Yes," he replied, "a splendid one. What do you think of this boy? He is worth five hundred dollars to us."

"Pooh! that little beggar? I would not give a penny for him; and if you are going to try the Charley Ross game, you'll get sick of it before long."

"I'm not a beggar," replied Ned, indignantly. "I work for my livin'."

"No, you are not, my boy," assented Sims. "You've got plenty of money, so I'll trouble you for that five hundred dollars."

He grabbed Ned by the shoulder and took the envelope containing the money.

Turning to the table, Sims tore open the envelope, spread the bills upon the table, and asked his wife what she thought of that.

"It's a windfall, indeed," she replied. "But what will you do with the boy?"

"Lock him in the cellar, when we are ready to leave, which will be in a few hours."

On hearing this, Ned, who had been completely dumbfounded by the expeditious manner in which he was robbed, slipped out of the room, intending to get into the street and run for the police.

But he had scarcely moved before Sims uttered an oath and rushed after him.

In the confusion of the moment Ned turned to the left, on the landing, and did not discover his mistake until he found himself at the foot of the flight of stairs leading to the story above, instead of at the top of those that extended from the lower floor.

Without reflecting where he was going, he darted up the steps closely pursued by Sims.

After ascending two flights of stairs, Ned found himself at the scuttle opening on to the roof.

He raised it, stepped out on the top of the house, and found he could go no further, as the house was isolated from those adjoining it.

Ned had scarcely made this unwelcome discovery, when Sims made his appearance on the roof, closed the scuttle, and tried to catch him.

"Now, you little villain," said Sims, who was puffing and blowing, seizing him by the collar, "I guess your running days are over."

Then the pursuit commenced again, and continued until Ned, seeing no other way of escape, jumped into the top of a chimney, and commenced to descend.

For a short distance he got on very well, then coming to where the flue widened, he slipped and went tumbling down, until he struck in the fireplace of the room where Mrs. Sims was.

She had just got through counting the money and replaced it in the envelope, when Ned, black as charcoal from head to foot, bounced out of the chimney in a cloud of soot.

He darted toward the door, and seeing the envelope with the money in it on the table, instinctively grabbed it as he passed.

He fairly flew downstairs, threw open the front door, jumped into the street, and never paused until he got home.

His mother was overjoyed, when she saw the money, heard the story, and read the letter.

She then went to bed and dropped off to sleep.

An hour passed; she was sleeping peacefully, and

the water in the kettle was boiling and bubbling, when the door of the shanty was cautiously opened and Alf Sims entered with a dark lantern in his hand.

Putting the lantern on the table, he drew a knife, and awakened Mrs. Dumfrey.

About this time, Ned, who slept on a pallet in one corner of the room, waked up, and saw what was going on.

Slipping to the stove, he got a large dipper full of boiling water, and swish it went on the back of Sims' neck, making him yell and wheel around.

He jumped at Ned and seized him, but before he could do anything more Mrs. Dumfrey was combing his hair with a three-legged stool.

Sims tried to beat a retreat, but he was met at the door by a man in sailor's garb, who tripped him up and secured him.

The newcomer was Mike Dumfrey, who had arrived in port that evening, and had just found his way home.

The Walrus was caught in the ice, but finally got out safe, and returned with a full cargo of oil.

Sims was tried and sent to the penitentiary.

With his own savings and Ned's five hundred dollars Mike Dumfrey went into business and prospered.

SPECULATORS HOLDING ALASKA FARM LANDS.

Several real estate speculators are arranging to establish offices or connections in Eastern cities of the United States with a view to selling Alaska farm lands. A decent regard for the best interests of this Territory justifies the publication of the fact that the only Alaska farm lands for sale are the homesteads which have been patented, many of which have passed into the hands of speculators for merely nominal considerations, and are to be offered to the outside public at prices of \$50 to \$100 per acre.

Of course there is not a chance on earth to sell Alaska farm lands to anybody but a sucker, for the simple reason that any man can get 160 acres absolutely free by merely going to a land office and signing his name to an application, and the land thus acquired will be fully as good and often better than any land the speculators have for sale at any price.

Any number of cases could be specifically named where newcomers have bought land in Alaska, paying from \$10 to \$75 an acre only to discover later that the land across the road was free to anybody for the asking.

The man who contemplates coming to Alaska to farm would better keep his money for improvements and take a piece of free land from the United States Government rather than make a present of it to some agreeable gentleman who has nothing better to offer for cash than the Government gladly supplies free.

THE NEWS IN SHORT ARTICLES

CAUGHT BABY IN MIDAIR.

Mrs. Mary Lopiccola, of Stony Road, Cal., and her two babies were saved when Joseph Stinger, a livery-man, checked a runaway horse. The horse struggled a moment and then came to a sudden halt, the impact of the stop hurling the six-months-old child of Mrs. Lopiccola into the air. At this moment Jack Greggs stepped into the scene, catching the baby in mid-air as it fell.

CAMEL IN BIG DEMAND.

Along the banks of the Suez Canal and thence along the old coast road to the east you will find to-day between the endless series of British encampments caravans of camels passing to and fro with their burdens or lying patiently at their mangers and chewing the cud with that tranquil expression of the beast, which no stress of war can disturb.

There are more camels gathered here than ever were assembled in the bazaars of Cairo or Damascus. Though the defence of Egypt has been carried forward from the canal itself to the hills and dunes of the Sinai desert and to the Land of Promise beyond, the canal is still an integral part of the defensive scheme. Roads and railways, it is true, run out here and there eastward from the bank, but there remains a vast hinterland unreclaimed from the desert waste, in which our troops continually move.

FISHING FOR SHARK, NEW HAWAIIAN SPORT.

Hawaiian waters teem with fishes in infinite variety of form and color, and there is splendid fishing in the island waters. There is a constantly increasing number of enthusiasts who are finding great sport with rod and line from boats along the reefs or from rocky points in the swirling surf.

The Hawaii Tuna Fishing Club of Honolulu offers exceptional facilities to the angler in reaching the famous game fishing grounds, and under its direction it has brought the sport into national prominence.

The world's record for tuna catches was made in Hawaiian waters by mainland sportsmen. The Tuna Club now has a well equipped rendezvous at Kihei, Maui, while similar fishing is accessible from Honolulu, Halwehwa, Hilo, Kailua and Waimea as bases.

The mainland game fishermen now rendezvous in the "winter" season at Honolulu, bringing their fishing boats with them. Among the game fishes are the yellow and blue fin tuna, ono, ulua and swordfish.

Another sport which is coming to be much in vogue is that of shark fishing. Generally these monsters of the deep can be lured in large numbers by

trolling an animal carcass a mile or two offshore the day before.

Almost daily in the tourist seasons parties of hotel guests are made up for this most exciting sport. A power launch is used for the purpose. Cautiously approaching the quarry, a harpoon is thrown into the back of one of the monsters or he is induced to snap a baited hook.

In either case the excitement begins at once, and the boat is often towed for a long time by the powerful fish before it is killed. The spice of adventure adds to the fascination of this sport.

URGE RAISING OF RABBITS FOR MEAT.

Rabbits, which have proved a valuable source of food in Europe during the present war, may well be raised more extensively in America by way of reducing the drain on the ordinary meat supply, according to biologists of the United States Department of Agriculture.

The business of growing rabbits, the specialists point out, can be carried on by youths and adults not engaged in military or other national service, or in regular industrial employment. The animals may be raised in back yards of cities and towns as well as on farms.

The Belgian hare, says a statement by the United States Department of Agriculture, breeds rapidly, matures quickly, and produces a palatable and highly nutritious meat. The cost of production is less than that of any other meat, not excepting poultry. The supply can be greatly increased within a few months, without requiring space that may be needed for the production of crops. Practical experience has demonstrated that rabbit meat can be produced in unlimited quantities at a cost of about six cents a pound; and by utilizing lawn cuttings and other vegetation that would otherwise be wasted, the cost can be made even lower.

The Belgian and Flemish giant rabbits are recommended for meat production, as the ordinary tame rabbit is smaller and develops more slowly. Stock of Belgian hares may be bought from breeders in nearly all the States at \$1 to \$3 each. They may occasionally be had from pet stock dealers. Fancy pedigreed stock is not required for meat production.

Rabbits are easily kept, say the experts. They eat hay, grass, lawn cuttings and green vegetation of many kinds. Females should be allowed to breed when eight or ten months old, and during the year should raise four litters of about six young each. Well fed, the young reach marketable size when three to four months old and average from five to six pounds live weight.

The Department of Agriculture has published a bulletin on raising rabbits, which will be helpful to those who wish to engage in this pursuit.

ARTICLES OF ALL KINDS

VIOLATED BONE DRY LAW.

A local shoemaker of Independence, Kan., was brought into Police Court one day charged with violation of the Bone Dry Law. He was accused of slipping small bottles of whisky into the shoes of favored customers. "The drinks are on me," he said when confronted with the evidence and witnesses.

FISH HAD FOUR FEET.

While fishing in the Iowa River Raymond Peterson caught a strange thing. Local scientists have pronounced it a "hicoperotisbygoshaway," but some of our best posted Nimrods say it is a mud puppy. Anyway, it was a strange looking critter with a body shaped like an eel. It was 24½ inches long. It had a head like a fish with the exception that instead of gills it had a collar of fur just back of the head. It had four legs and in some respects resembled a baby alligator. The little animal put up a pretty game fight for a while, but it soon died when exposed to the air. It will be sent to a New York museum.

COWBELLS SAVES CHERRIES.

W. A. Bull of Igo, Cal., saved his big cherry crop with cowbells operated by a water wheel.

Bull has an orchard up South Fork Creek. His cherries ripened, but as fast as they matured birds picked them off. Bull rigged up some ordinary scarecrows. They did well enough for a day or so, or until the wise birds detected the fraud.

As a last resort Bull tied several cowbells in the treetops, and to the tinklers attached strings, which he jerked from his front porch. The cowbells' jangling scared the birds away all right and bid fair to save the cherry crop, but Bull got tired of jerking the strings all day long.

Now he has a water wheel that runs his wife's churn. So Bull attached the strings to the churn dasher. As the water wheel went its rounds the churn dasher bobbed up and down and the cowbells kept up their jangling in the treetops all day long. The birds were scared away effectually and Bull saved his cherry crop.

CHINA HAS THE BIGGEST BELL.

Moscow claims the distinction of possessing the largest bell in Christendom to be in actual use. Its weight is 128 tons. The qualifying phrase "in Christendom" is used because China claims to have at least two bells, also in actual use, which are even larger.

The larger of these may be seen in the great Buddhist monastery not far from Canton. It is eighteen feet high and has a circumference of forty-five feet, being cast in solid bronze. It is one of eight monastery bells that were cast toward the

end of the fourteenth century by command of the Emperor Yung-lo. During the process of casting eight men lost their lives.

On both sides it is covered with an inscription in embossed Chinese characters about half an inch in length, covering even the top piece from which it swings, the total number being 84,000. The second bell, which is three feet shorter than its rival at Canton, hangs in a temple of its own to the north of Peking, almost on the way to the Great Wall of China.

HOW WAR IS USING UP TONS OF OUR METAL.

Up to date the warring Allies of Europe have placed orders for 35,000,000 shells in the United States. This means a lot of valuable metal going to waste, for these orders require a total of 101,000,000 pounds of copper, 46,750,000 pounds of spelter and 173,250 pounds of lead.

A British 18-pounder, or 3.3-inch shrapnel, requires 5 pounds 9 1-8 ounces of brass, containing 66 to 70 per cent of copper, or nearly 3 3-4 pounds. A small copper band around the shell adds 4 3-4 ounces, making the total copper 4.04 pounds. Spelter consumption per shell of this size is about 1.87 pounds. Lead bullets weighing 7.92 pounds constitute the metal load of the projectile.

One pound of copper is used in making 24 Lebel rifle cartridges. Every 125 of these cartridges consume 1 pound of spelter and a small amount of nickel. Steel consumption per shell varies more widely with the different types.

SOMETHING ABOUT POWDER AND GUNS.

Just 33 complete chemical and mechanical operations have to be gone through with great accuracy, precision and carefulness, before white cotton, mixed with sulphuric and nitric acids, becomes smokeless powder.

And after, with elaborate processes, the powder is made at the Picatinny Arsenal, it must travel from Dover, N. J., to the Frankford Arsenal, outside Philadelphia, there to be but an element in the 40 complete manufacturing and assembling operations that are required to make an American rifle cartridge.

A rifle is a more or less simple-looking mechanism, but to make this rifle 1,223 separate manufacturing operations must be executed.

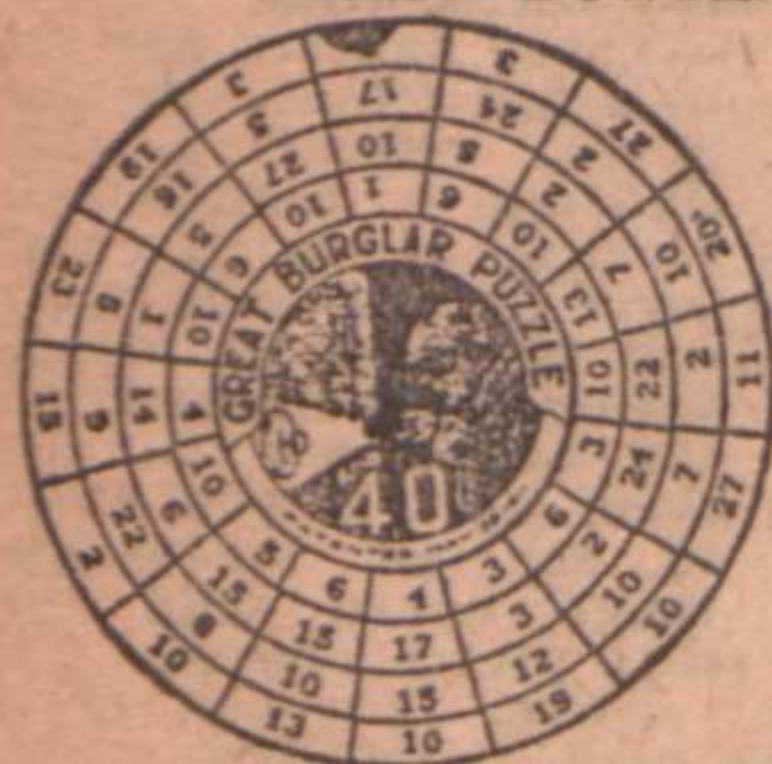
One round of 3-inch shrapnel means 355 operations; to make an automatic pistol, 614; and for the terrible little mitrailleuse or machine gun, 1,990. The lightest 3-inch field gun costs \$1,400.

The 14-inch coast-defense gun is made at Watervliet Arsenal near Albany, weighing when finished 138,000 pounds and costing \$55,000 and wound about with 37,000 pounds of wire. Its disappearing carriage involves as many as 3,000 separate parts.

MYSTERIOUS PLATE LIFTER.

Made of fine rubber, with bulb on one end and inflator at other. Place it under a table cover, under plate or glass, and bulb is pressed underneath, object rises mysteriously; 40 inches long. Price 25c., postpaid. C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d St., New York City.

GREAT BURGLAR PUZZLE.



The latest and most fascinating puzzle ever placed on the market. Patented May 30. It consists of four revolving dials, each dial containing 16 figures, 64 figures in all. To open the safe these dials must be turned around until the figures in each of the 16 columns added together total 40. The puzzle is made on the plan of the combination lock on the large iron safes that open on a combination of figures. Persons have been known to sit up all night, so interested have they become trying to get each column to total 40. In this fascinating puzzle. With the printed key which we send with each puzzle the figures can be set in a few minutes so as to total 40 in each column.

Price 15 cents; mailed, postpaid. H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

THE BALANCING BIRD.



It measures more than four inches from tip to tip of wings, and will balance perfectly on the tip of your finger nail, on the point of a lead pencil, or on any pointed instrument, only the tip of the bill resting on the nail or pencil point, the whole body of the bird being suspended in the air with nothing to rest on. It will not fall off unless shaken off. A great novelty. Wonderful, amusing and instructive.

Price 10 cents, mailed postpaid. WOLFF Novelty Co., 168 W. 23d St., N. Y.

SHERIFF BADGE.



With this badge attached to your coat or vest you can show the boys that you are a sheriff, and if they don't behave themselves you might lock them up. It is a beautiful nickel-plated badge, 2 1/4 by 2 1/2 inches in size, with the words "Sheriff 23. By Heck"

in nickel letters on the face of it, with a pin on the back for attaching it to your clothing. Send for one and have some fun with the boys.

Price 15 cents, or 3 for 40 cents; sent by mail, postpaid. H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

THE ELK HEAD PUZZLE.



Just out and one of the most fascinating puzzles on the market. The stunt is to separate the antlers and rejoin them. It looks easy, but try it and you will admit that it is without exception the best puzzle you have ever seen. You can't leave it alone. Made of silvered metal. Price 12c.; 3 for 30c., sent by mail, postpaid.

C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d Street, N. Y.

THE SPIDER WEB PUZZLE.



A very interesting little puzzle. It consists of a heavily nickeled plate and brass ring. The object is to get the ring from the side to the center and back. This is very hard, but we give directions making it easy. Price, 10 cents each, by mail, postpaid.

FRANK SMITH, 883 Lenox Ave., N. Y.

THE CANADIAN WONDER CARD TRICK.



Astonishing, wonderful, and perplexing! Have you seen them? Any child can work them, and yet, what they do is so amusing that the sharpest people on earth are fooled. We cannot tell you what they do, or others would get next and spoil the fun. Just get a set and read the directions. The results will startle your friends and utterly mystify them. A genuine good thing if you wish to have no end of amusement. Price 10c. by mail, postpaid.

H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

RUBBER SUCKER.



Rubber Vacuum Suckers

The latest novelty out! Dishes and plates will stick to the table, cups to the saucers like glue. Put one under a glass and then try to lift it. You can't. Lots of fun. Always put it on a smooth surface and wet the rubber. Many other tricks can be accomplished with this novelty. Price 12 cts. each by mail, postpaid.

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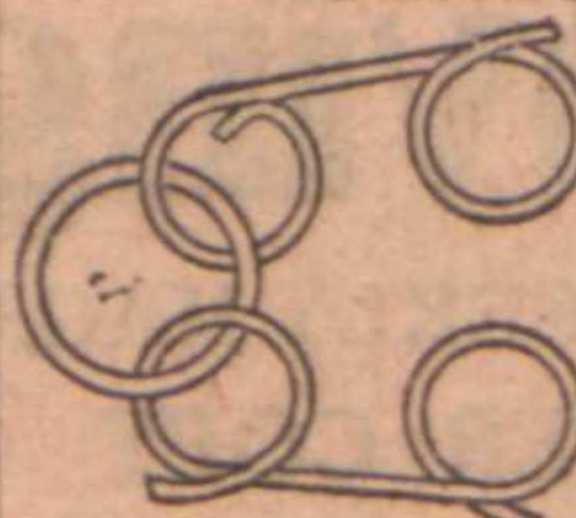


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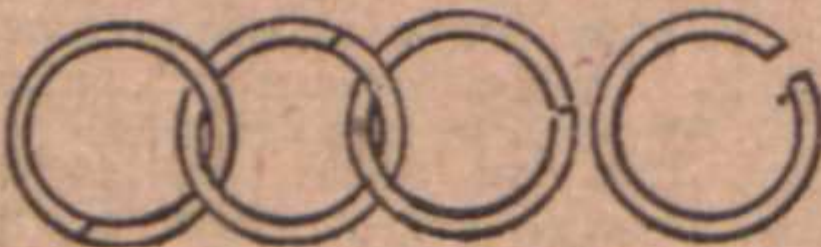


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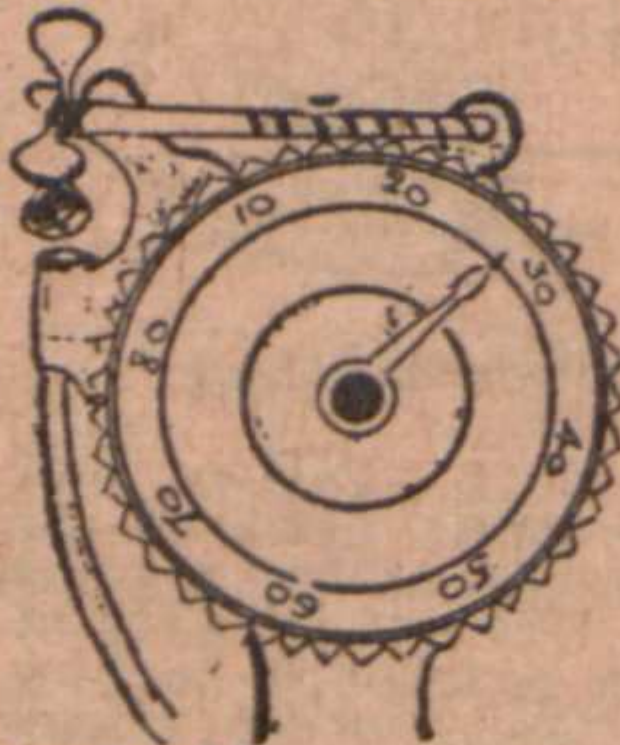
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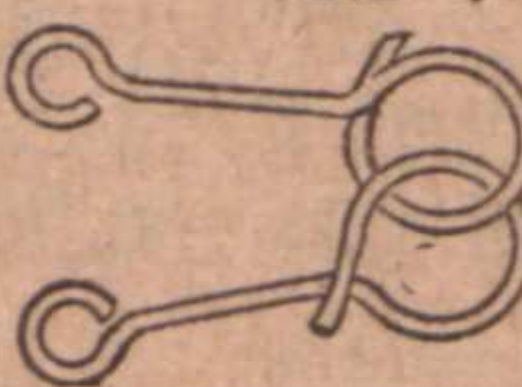
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